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A GENTLEMAN'S Religion.

In Three Parts.

The First contains the *Principles* of NATURAL Religion.
The Second and Third
The *Doctrins* of Christianity, both as to Matters of FAITH and PRACTICE.

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In Three Parts.

The First containing the Principles of Natural Religion.

The Second [illegible]

The Duties of Christianity,
both as to Matters of FAITH
and PRACTICE.

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A *GENTLEMAN's* RELIGION:

WITH THE *Grounds* and *Reaſons* of It.

I. SInce almoſt all Men (however different in other Opinions and Intereſts) have ever agreed in this, That there is a God, to whoſe power all things are ſubject; That the true Service and Worſhip of God (which is called Religi-

on) ſhall be rewarded with Future Happineſs; and, That the Neglect and Contempt of Religion ſhall be puniſhed with Future Miſery; Every Man ſurely has reaſon to believe thus much at leaſt, That what is ſo generally and firmly believed may be poſſibly, nay and is probably, a Truth. And whereſoever there is a poſſibility, and much more where there is a probability, of a great Good on the one hand, and a great Evil on the other; there certainly every Man is concerned to enquire into the reality of the thing; that he may not miſs of the one, if it be attainable, nor fall into the other, if it be avoidable. I conclude therefore,

fore, That *it is a very great folly for any Man to give over ſearching after the True Religion, untill he has found it; Except he were able to demonſtrate, either that there is no God; or elſe, that there is no Worſhip or Service due to him.*

II. In all Matters of great and ſerious Conſequence, no Man that is wiſe, will act by chance, and at random, without being able to give ſome Reaſon for what he does. For he that does any thing, and knows not why, is more likely to do himſelf Hurt than Good; becauſe there are more Ways to the former, than to the latter. Since therefore Religion is a thing of the greateſt Moment and Importance that can be,

I conclude, that *no Man ought to chuſe his Religion blindly, and by chance; but that every Man ought to have ſome Reaſon for what he profeſſes. Whatever Religion,* therefore, *a Man is bred up in from his Youth, it certainly is very fit for him, when he comes to Years of Diſcretion, to enquire into the Grounds and Reaſons of it.* For otherwiſe it is not poſſible for him to know whether he be in the Right, or the Wrong; in the way to Heaven, or Hell.

III. If there be a God, and if he requires any ſervice or worſhip (*i.e.* any Religion) from us, it is undoubtedly for this End, that it may be a Trial of our Faithfulneſs and Obedience to him.

Now,

Now, whoſoever has a mind to prove his Servant, whether he will be faithful and obedient, he will not give him ſuch dark and intricate Commands, as ſhall puzzle him to find out the meaning of them; (For, how can a Servant approve himſelf faithful and obedient, if he be uncertain what it is that his Maſter requires from him?) But he will ſurely give him ſuch Commands and Directions as are eaſie enough to be underſtood, however difficult they may be to be enterprized, or accompliſhed. I conclude therefore, That *all the Duties of Religion, which God requires of any Man, muſt needs be eaſie enough for him to underſtand, however hard they*

may be to be practiſed. For, otherwiſe, Religion would be a Trial rather of a Man's Wit and Cunning, than of his Faithfulneſs and Obedience. And therefore alſo I cannot but conclude, That *moſt*, if not all the *Controverſies about Religion*, which at this Day diſtract the World, *do not proceed from any Difficulty in or about the Determination of all things neceſſary in Religion it ſelf; but partly from the Pride of ſome Learned Men*, who have loved to ſtart new and difficult Queſtions, and to impoſe their private Sentiments upon the World, that they might be admired for their Wit and Subtilty; *partly from the Covetouſneſs and Ambition*

of

of ſome, whether Learned, or Unlearned, who have found that their Worldly Intereſt will be better ſerved by ſome Doctrines (no matter how falſe and precarious) than by others; *and partly from the Prejudice of moſt Men*, who are apt, with great Zeal and Eagerneſs, to contend for all thoſe things which, from their Childhood, they have been taught to have a Reverence for. And I farther conclude, That *whoſoever has a ſincere deſire to embrace True Religion, muſt lay aſide Pride, Ambition, Covetouſneſs and Prejudice*, which would miſ-guide him; *and follow his ſober and unprejudicate Reaſon*, which will ever lead him in the right Way.

IV. There are different ſorts, or rather degrees of Aſſurance, which Men have concerning Things. Some things are evident of themſelves, without any Proof; ſome things we are aſſured of, by the Teſtimony of our Senſes; ſome things we receive as Truths, becauſe we find them to follow from other Truths already received; and ſome things we believe only upon the Teſtimony of others. Moreover, ſome things we are perſuaded of, without any Doubt or Diffidence; whereas other things do ſeem, at beſt, to be but likely or probable, and that too in a different degree, according as their Evidence is ſtronger, or weaker. Now,

every

every ſober Man, where he has certain Evidence of a thing, there he acts with Aſſurance; where the Matter is but probable, there he proceeds with Caution: But where a Man is under a Neceſſity of doing one way or other, and where the Matter appears doubtful on both ſides, there it becomes him to weigh the Reaſons on both parts with due Conſideration; and according as he finds the greater Probability to be on the one hand rather than the other, ſo to ſquare his Actions accordingly. Since therefore every Man muſt neceſſarily either live religiouſly or not live religiouſly; I conclude, that *if upon a ſerious Conſideration of*

of the matter, there appear to be more probable Reaſons and Arguments for Religion than againſt it, every wiſe and ſober Man muſt embrace Religion. This I ſay, not but that I think there are even demonſtrative Arguments for Religion; and not ſo much as one probable one againſt it: But becauſe that which to me ſeems demonſtrative, to another may appear but probable, I thought it fit to note, That every Man in point of common Prudence is obliged to follow Religion, if it does but appear more likely and probable to him than Irreligion.

V. Whether it is poſſible for any Agent to produce a new

new Being purely out of nothing, may with much ſhew of Reaſon be doubted: As alſo Whether meer Matter alone, without any other Agent or efficient Cauſe, can ever be able to work it ſelf into any different Species or Forms. But this appears as certain as any thing can be; That where there is neither any Agent or efficient Cauſe to work, nor any Matter or Subject to be wrought upon, there it is utterly impoſſible for any thing ever to be produced into Being. Since therefore I find that there are many things which actually have a Being and Exiſtence, I conclude, That *of abſolute neceſſity there muſt be ſomething*

thing or other which has been from all Eternity, and never had a Beginning. For otherwiſe, if we ſuppoſe that ever there was a time when nothing at all did exiſt, it follows, from what has been ſaid, that it would be utterly impoſſible that any thing ever ſhould be produced into Exiſtence.

VI. Since of neceſſity we muſt acknowledge ſomething to have been Eternal, I cannot but conclude, That *the Eternity of ſuch a Being as God is deſcribed to be, is much more probable and fit to be believed, than the Eternity of ſuch a Being as I ſee this World to be.* For when I go about to conceive a Notion of the Eternity

Eternity of the World (I mean in the like Posture that now it is in) there do occurr to my Mind such Difficulties, or rather Impossibilities, as I think no Man can digest. For he that affirms the World, as now it stands, to have been Eternal, must of Necessity grant that there has been an Eternal Succession of Men, Beasts, and Vegetables, and that to a number actually infinite: (for if the number be not infinite, how can the Succession have been Eternal?) And yet a number actually infinite to me appears to bea plain Contradiction. For that which is infinite cannot be made bigger, whereas there is no number but may be made bigger

bigger by the Addition of Units. Again if any one ſhall affirm that an infinite number is no Contradiction; and that there has been a Succeſſion of ſuch a number of Beings in the World; then thus I argue, That if there has been a Succeſſion of an infinite number of Men, Beaſts, *&c.* then, by a Parity of Reaſon, there has been alſo a Succeſſion of an infinite number of Days and Nights; and if ſo, then likewiſe of an infinite number of Years too; (for if the number of Years can be limited, ſo can that of Days too, ſince every Year contains juſt ſuch a certain number of Days.) Now this I ſuppoſe muſt be granted me

me, That infinite numbers are equal: (for if one number be leſs than another, how can it be infinite?) And if ſo, then it muſt follow that in the Eternity of the World the number of Years is equal to the nnmber of Days, which is abſurd; becauſe every Year contains in its ſelf a number of 365 Days. Theſe Difficulties, or rather Impoſſibilities, I ſay, do make the notion of the World's Eternity (I mean as the World now is) to appear to me as an abſurd and unreaſonable Suppoſition. But then as to God, Although I confeſs it to be difficult, and perhaps impoſſible, for Man to comprehend the manner, how he

is, or can be, eternal without beginning; yet ſince the thing it ſelf is ſo uncontrollably evident that ſomething is ſo eternal, (though the manner how is to me incomprehenſible) I find no other Scruple or Difficulty in admitting the Eternity of God. For though it ſeems contrary to all Reaſon to affirm an eternal Succeſſion of divers things, one after another, without a Beginning; yet I can find no manner of Repugnancy in maintaining that there is one immutable Being (*i. e.* God) which never began to be.

VII. Whether the matter, of which this viſible world is framed, has exiſted from all Eternity,

Eternity, or whether it were produced out of nothing by the Almighty Power of God, is a Queſtion which reaſon alone, I think, can never determine. But when I contemplate and conſider the great Variety, Order, Beauty, and Uſefulneſs, which do evidently appear in all the Parts of the World, as they are placed together, and anſwer one another; I cannot but conclude, That *the whole World, and all its Parts, are contriv'd, framed and faſhioned, by a wiſe and powerful Being, whom we call God:* As when I ſee a curious Clock or Engine, I preſently conclude that it was made and contrived by ſome Artiſt; and ſhould laugh at that

that Man who would offer to ſay that it was formed and faſhioned only by chance.

VIII. That Miracles (*i. e.* wonderful Works, ſurpaſſing the ordinary courſe of Nature and Power of Art) have been wrought for Confirmation of the Truth of Religion, is a thing that I ſhall take for granted at preſent, becauſe it will appear to be proved beyond any juſt Exception in the Sequel of this Diſcourſe; And from thence, I think I may moſt reaſonably conclude, That *there is a being Superiour to Nature, who can command and controll it as he pleaſes*, *i. e.* in other Terms, That *there is a God.*

IX. The

IX. The Hiſtories of all Ages, and Travellers into all Countries, do univerſally concurr in this Teſtimony, That there is no Nation or People, whether learned or unlearned, but what do own the being of a God. And thoſe few Perſons who have preſumed to deny it, have ever been look'd on as Prodigies and Monſters of Mankind. Furthermore, even thoſe few who have denied the Being of God, have ever been Men of ſuch debauched and profligate Lives, that we have great Reaſon to believe that they firſt have wiſhed that there might be no God to puniſh them; and then, without any other ground or Reaſon,

Reaſon, have believed, or rather pretended to believe, what they have wiſhed. For it is almoſt ever obſerved, that when debauched and atheiſtical Perſons do draw near to Death, they do either renounce their Atheiſm, own the being of a God, and make Supplication to him; or at leaſt have their Minds poſſeſt with ſuch doubts and fears, as plainly ſhew that they have ſtill a ſtrong Suſpicion that there likely may be a God, for ought they know, who will call them to an Account for all their Wickedneſs. Since then all ſorts of Men, both learned and unlearned, and all Nations of Men, both civil and barbarous,

rous, have always owned the Being of God; since his being has never been denied but by very few indeed; since that denial has rather proceeded from their Wishes and Desires, than from their Reason and Understanding; and lastly, since they have not been able wholly to extinguish the Belief of a God out of their Minds although they have earnestly endeavoured it; I conclude, That *the Belief of a God, in Man, is neither the Effect of Chance*, because 'tis Universal, *nor of Ignorance*, because it possesses the most Learned, *nor of State-Policy*, because 'tis received among the most barbarous and unciviliz'd People; but

that

that *there is a God, who has made all Men, and has (as a Token of his Work) ſtamped and engraved* this *his Mark and Character upon them.*

X. There is no Man of common Senſe, who builds a convenient and goodly Structure, but he takes care likewiſe to keep it in good Order and Repair, after it is built. And there is no Fabrick but, in Tract of Time, will viſibly decay, if conſtant care be not taken of it. Since therefore, God has erected and framed this goodly Structure of the World; and ſince in ſo long a time there is no Manner of decay to be found in it (as is abundantly proved by *Hackwell*, in his Apology

pology on this Subject) I conclude, That *God, not only made this World by his Power, but alſo governs it by his Providence.* And for the only Objection, which ſeems to be of any Force againſt God's Providence; namely, that wicked Men do often thrive and proſper, whilſt good and Vertuous Men are oppreſſed with Miſery; it is moſt eaſily and naturally ſolved, by ſuppoſing, (what ſhall anon be proved) That there are abundant Rewards for good Men, and ſufficient puniſhments for the wicked, to be diſtributed in a Life which is to come; which will bring all things to be equal at the laſt.

XI. Every Parent, who begets and brings up a Child; every Master, who feeds and pays a Servant; every Prince, who governs and protects his Subjects; and every Benefactor, who does any act of Kindness for another; may very reasonably, and do always, expect a Return of Love, Obedience and Gratitude, in due Proportion to the Benefits received from them. Since then *God* is more than a Parent to us, for he made us and our Parents too; since he is so kind a Master, who gives us our Food, and all the Conveniences of Life; since he governs and protects us, by his over-ruling Providence, more effectually than

than any earthly Prince does his Subjects; And laſtly, ſince he is our greateſt and ſupreme Benefactor, who has given us all the good which we poſſeſs and enjoy; I cannot but conclude, that *he expects a return of Love, Obedience and Gratitude from us* (I will not ſay proportionable to the Benefits received from him, for that, perhaps, may exceed our Ability; but) *proportionable unto our Ability or Capacity.*

XII. That *God* is wiſe and powerful, I gather from his Work, which I contemplate in the Viſible World. And from thence I conclude, That *he will ſufficiently puniſh thoſe Perſons who deſpiſe him, ſo far as not to love, thank and*

obey him, according as he expects and requires from them. That he is also good and gracious, I gather from those good things which he has bestowed upon us, relating both to our Bodies and Minds. And from thence I conclude, That *he will abundantly reward all those persons who take care to pay him that Love, Gratitude and Obedience which he expects.*

XIII. That these Rewards and Punishments are not finally distributed in this Life is very evident: Because we often see Men, that are notoriously wicked, enjoy all the pleasures; and others, that are conspicuously vertuous, undergo almost all the Calamities of this World, even unto their

their very Graves. I conclude therefore, That *there is another Life, after this, in which these Rewards and Punishments shall be duly distributed.*

XIV. When a Man is once convinced that there is a God, to whom there is a Service due; and that there are Rewards and Punishments to be dispensed to all Men, according as they have performed or neglected that Service; the grand Enquiry that every Man is concerned to make, is, What he must do to avoid these Punishments, and to be made Partaker of these Rewards. And here I think I may most easily and naturally make these following

Concluſions; *viz.* 1. *He who does what God requires from him ſhall not be puniſhed but rewarded.* 2. *God requires from every Man that he ſhould uſe his honeſt Endeavour, by all means, to know and underſtand his Will as perfectly as he can.* For this is but Reaſon for every Maſter to expect from his Servant; much more for ſuch a Maſter as God. 3. *If a Man does his heartieſt and beſt Endeavour, firſt to know and then to perform the Will of God; God will require no more from him.* For to me it ſeems utterly inconſiſtent, with the Wiſdom of God to expect, and with his Goodneſs to require, any more from a Man than what he is able to perform;

form; *i. e.* any more than his beſt and moſt hearty Endeavours.

XV. There are, in the general, but two ways of finding out, and knowing the Will of God. The one is by the uſe of our natural Reaſon and Underſtanding; the other is by attending to that Revelation which God has made of his Will, to the World. Here then I conclude, *I muſt make it my Buſineſs, firſt to enquire into the Truth and Reality of this Revelation; and then, to make uſe of that, and my Reaſon together, in order to find out what is God's Will.*

XVI. That there was ſuch a Perſon as *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*, in *Galilee*, in the time of *Tibe-*

rius Cæsar, the *Roman* Emperor; That he had a Company of poor Men for his Disciples; That He and his Disciples went about the Country of *Judea*, Teaching and Preaching; That he was put to death upon the Cross, after the *Roman* manner, under *Pontius Pilate*, the *Roman* Governor of *Judea*; That after his Death, his Disciples went about into all, or most, Parts of the then known World, Teaching and Preaching that this Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World, and that he was risen from the Dead, and gone into Heaven; That in a few Years they converted a very great Number of People, in all places, to this Belief;

Belief; That the Profeſſors of this Belief were called Chriſtians; That they were moſt cruelly perſecuted, and many Thouſands of them put to death, and that with moſt exquiſite Torments, for no other Reaſon, but becauſe they were Chriſtians; That theſe Perſecutions were ſeveral times renewed againſt them, for the ſpace of about Three Hundred Years; And yet, for all this, that the Number of Chriſtians daily increaſed, and that not only Ideots and Unlearned Men, but great Scholars and Philoſophers were converted to Chriſtianity, even in the Times of Perſecution; All this, being merely Matter of Fact, was never yet

denied by the greateſt Enemies of Chriſtian Religion. And, indeed, theſe things are ſo abundantly teſtified by the Hiſtories, and other Writings, of thoſe Times; and have been ſo generally receiv'd for Truth, as well by the Oppoſers, as Believers of Chriſtianity, by a conſtant, univerſal, and uninterrupted Tradition, from thoſe Days, even unto this Time; that a Man may as well deny the Truth of any, or of all, the Hiſtories of the World, as of this. Now, ſince all Men generally have a ſtrong Inclination to retain and ſtick to that Religion (whatever it be) in which both they and their Fathers have been brought up; and no leſs an Averſion to all cauſe-

cauſeleſs Innovations in Matters of Religion; Moreover, ſince all Men, without exception, who are in their Wits, have naturally a moſt earneſt deſire to preſerve their Lives as long as they can, and to keep themſelves free from Pain and Trouble; I think I may reaſonably conclude, that *there muſt have been ſome extraordinary ſtrong, and even irreſiſtable Motive, which could prevail upon ſuch Multitudes of People to forſake theirs and their Anceſtors old Religion, and to embrace Chriſtianity*, which then had but newly appeared in the World, and which, in thoſe Days, did ſeldom fail to involve its Proſelytes in moſt grievous Troubles and Perſecutions.

XVII.

XVII. That this Motive could not be the Hopes of any Profit or Advantage in this Life, is moſt evident: Becauſe Chriſtianity was, in thoſe Days, moſt commonly perſecuted, even unto death. It muſt therefore, of neceſſity, be the hopes of ſome Benefit or Happineſs which ſhould accrue to them, after this Life was at an end. And this Benefit or Happineſs could not ſeem ſmall and inconſiderable to them; nor could the Hope which they conceived of it be weak, or doubtful: For there is ſcarce any Man, or ever was, in the World, who would run himſelf into certain Miſery and Perſecution, even to the loſing of his Life, only upon a

weak

weak and *doubtful* Hope of ſome *ſmall* and *inconſiderable* Benefit or Happineſs to be enjoyed in a Life to come. I conclude therefore, That *the Primitive Chriſtians were undoubtingly poſſeſſed with a ſtrong Belief, and moſt firm Perſuaſion, That whoſoever ſhould truly embrace, profeſs, and live according to, the Chriſtian Religion in this Life, was certainly to be made Partaker of ſome great and ineſtimable Happineſs in the Life to come.*

XVIII. That this Belief and Perſuaſion did not proceed from any Frenzy, or Madneſs, (which ſometimes poſſeſſes Men with very ſtrong Imaginations,) is very evident; both becauſe there was ſuch a Multitude

titude of them, who exactly agreed in the same Sentiments; and also, because it appears, both from the Writings and Actions of the Primitive Christians, that they were Men of Reason and Sobriety, and some of them Persons of great Learning. As evident also it is, that it could not proceed from the Force of any Argument, drawn from the Principles of bare Natural Reason, without Revelation. For, What Man in his Wits, without pretending some Revelation from Heaven, could ever be perswaded, that the Embracing of the Religion taught by such a particular Person, more than another, would make him happy in the Life to come? I conclude

clude therefore, That *the Diſciples of Jeſus, who preached Chriſtianity abroad in the World, did convince and ſatisfie their Proſelytes, that it was revealed by God from Heaven, that whoſoever would believe on Jeſus, and receive, and live according to, his Religion, ſhould be made very happy in the next Life.*

XIX. The main Argument which the firſt Preachers of Chriſtianity made uſe of, to convince the World that this was a Divine Revelation, was this; *viz.* Becauſe that Jeſus, in his Life-time, did perform ſuch and ſo many Miracles, and wonderful Works, as ſufficiently ſhewed, that he had his Commiſſion and Power from

from God; and becauſe his Diſciples (whom he had appointed to teach his Religion to the World) for many Years after his Death, did likewiſe continue to work many Miracles in the Name of Jeſus; Which ſhewed, that God was with them in what they did and taught. The things by them alledged to have been performed by Jeſus, were ſuch as theſe: That he healed all manner of Diſeaſes and Diſtempers with a Touch, or barely with a Word ſpeaking; That he gave Sight to the Blind, Hearing to the Deaf, Speech to the Dumb, and Strength and Agility to the Lame and Maimed; That he raiſed ſeveral Perſons from the Dead; and

and that he himſelf aroſe from the Dead, after he had been crucified, and a Spear thruſt into his Vitals, and had lay'n dead in a Sepulchre unto the Third Day; And laſtly, That, after his Reſurrection, having ſeveral times appeared to his Diſciples, and converſed with them, for the ſpace of Forty Days, he was, at laſt, openly, and in their ſight, taken up alive into Heaven. The things alledged to have been done by his Diſciples, were, The Healing the Sick, the Lame, the Maimed, *&c.* and, in a particular manner, their Speaking all Languages, although they never had learned them. That all theſe things were pretended by the firſt Preachers of Chri-

Chriſtianity, is confeſſed on all Hands. And, undoubtedly, they muſt needs, at leaſt, *pretend* ſomething that was very extraordinary, or elſe they never could have converted ſuch vaſt Multitudes, under ſo many Diſadvantages as they and their Religion laboured. That theſe things were not only pretended, but really and actually performed, is, in my Opinion, uncontrollably evinced from the Teſtimony of the Diſciples themſelves, Who declared theſe things for Truth unto the World; Who could not themſelves be deceived in thoſe Matters of Fact, of which they pretended to have been Eye-Witneſſes; Who never would go about to impoſe a Lye

Lye upon the World, by which they could propoſe to themſelves no manner of Advantage in this Life, nor (if it were a Lye) in the Life to come; Who never would have expoſed themſelves to Poverty, to Racks, to Gibbets, to Fire and Faggot, (in a Word) to all ſorts of Torments and Deaths, only for the ſake of a fruitleſs and unprofitable Fable; Who being Men of unblameable Lives, for their Morality, had, doubtleſs, more Honeſty and Integrity, than to affirm thoſe things for certain Truths, which they muſt needs know to be mere Inventions; Who were too many in number, and too void of Craft and Guile, to combine together

together in framing a falſe Story, and none of them ever to betray or diſcover the Cheat; Who could never hope to impoſe the Belief of ſuch a Story upon a curious and inquiſitive Age (ſuch as that was wherein they lived) if it had been falſe, and therefore would certainly never have attempted it, if they had not known it to have been true; And, Laſtly, who, inſtead of convincing ſuch Multitudes as they did, muſt needs have been palpably diſcovered, and expoſed to the World for a Company of lewd Cheats and Impoſtors, in pretending that ſuch and ſuch things were done in the Land of *Judea* and *Jeruſalem*, (and done openly too,

too, in the Face of the World,) when it was ſo eaſie a matter to go or ſend to the place, to make Enquiry, and ſo to find out the Cheat, if a Cheat it had been. But that theſe ſame Miracles, and wonderful Works, did far ſurpaſs both the Courſe of Nature, and the Power of Art, is very evident: That they were not perform'd by the Aſſiſtance of any wicked Spirit, does ſufficiently appear; becauſe the very Intent and Deſign of them was to propagate a Doctrine in the World, which, by all, muſt be allowed to teach the pureſt, and moſt ſtrict Morality; to which it cannot be imagined, that any Impure and Evil Spirit would contribute any help.

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It remains therefore, that theſe things muſt needs have been performed, either by the immediate Power and Aſſiſtance of God, (who is both the Framer and Controller of Nature) or (which is the ſame thing in effect) by the Mediation and Miniſtry of good Spirits, who always act obediently to his Will. So that (whether mediately, or immediately) it is God who is to be looked upon as the Original and Author of all thoſe wonderful Things, which were done by Jeſus, and his Diſciples. Now then; Since God did interpoſe his Power, to work ſuch ſtrange and ſtupenduous things, for the Propagation and Confirmation of that Doctrine which was taught

taught by Jeſus and his Diſciples; This, I think, is a ſufficient Demonſtration, that their Doctrine was certainly true. For, Who can imagine that God ſhould make uſe of his extraordinary Power, only to cheat and deceive the World into the Belief of a Lye? I conclude therefore, That *the Primitive Chriſtians had ſufficient Reaſon to believe, that it was revealed by God from Heaven, that whoſoever would believe on Jeſus, and receive, and live according to his Religion, ſhould be made very happy in the next Life*; this very thing being the grand Point of Doctrine, which Jeſus and his Diſciples taught and preached to the World. And if we are ſure

ſure that the Primitive Chriſtians had Reaſon ſufficient to believe this; from hence it follows, That *we have ſufficient Reaſon to believe it alſo.*

XX. But Jeſus himſelf being long ſince aſcended into Heaven, and his Diſciples, who firſt preached the Goſpel, departed out of the World; here, *I think, it is neceſſary to enquire, to whom, or to what I muſt apply my ſelf, that* (amidſt the ſeveral Parties in the World, who all call themſelves True and Orthodox Chriſtians, each condemning all others but themſelves) *I may be truly and ſurely informed what is the true and genuine Religion or Doctrine of Jeſus, which I ought to receive, and live according*

to, in order to my future Happineſs. For, if I do not this, I muſt either reject the Doctrine of Jeſus, and ſo loſe my future Happineſs; or elſe take it altogether upon Truſt, and by chance, and then 'tis odds but I light upon the wrong, and muſt needs run a very great hazard. And though he who is in a Miſtake, and cannot tell how to help it, will, doubtleſs, find an eaſie Pardon from God; yet he who falls into Errour, for want of moderate Care and Diligence to find out the Truth, has, I think, no pretence either to Pardon, or ſo much as to Pity.

XXI. The *Roman Catholicks* do tell me, that I muſt apply my ſelf to the Church.

This Church they define to be, that Society of Perſons who profeſs Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and live in Subjection to, and Communion with the Pope, or Biſhop of *Rome*. This Church they ſay is infallible; and not only does not, but cannot err in any Doctrine of Religion. Go then, ſay they, to this Church, and receive the Doctrine which ſhe teaches; and there you have, certainly and infallibly, the true and pure Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. But I cannot give my Aſſent to follow this their Direction, becauſe I find ſuch great Difficulties in my way as, I think, are inſuparable; at leaſt, I am ſure, ſuch as I am not able to overcome. For, *Firſt*, Although

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it may be a certain Truth, that there ſhall always be a Church, that is to ſay, a Company of People, ſome where or other, profeſſing the true Chriſtian Religion, as long as the World ſhall laſt; yet what ſolid Proof can be brought, that this particular Society of Men, who live in Communion with the Pope, or Biſhop of *Rome*, are alone the true Church, and ſhall always keep and maintain amongſt them the true and uncorrupt Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt? This Matter being a Queſtion of Revelation, and poſitive Inſtitution, is uncapable of being proved by any Argument drawn from Natural Reaſon. And, as for the Texts of Scripture which they

alledge, it is even ridiculous to think, that any ſober and unprejudiced Perſon ſhould be convinced by them; (as will evidently appear to any one, who impartially reads what the *Romiſh* and Proteſtant Divines have written on this Controverſie:) For there are none of thoſe Texts, but are fairly and naturally capable of another Interpretation; and muſt be very much ſtrained and wreſted, to make them countenance the *Romiſh* Doctrine. Beſides that, the Divines of the Church of *Rome* do generally teach, That no Man can be ſure of the Authority or Senſe of any Text of Scripture, (eſpecially if it appear to be any way doubtful,) except he receives the

the Propoſal and Interpretation thereof from this their Church, which they ſay is infallible. So that a Man muſt of neceſſity believe the Infallibility of their Church, before he can any way be ſure of the Credit, or even of the Senſe, of thoſe Texts of Scripture which they bring to prove it. And then, What need is there of Scripture-Arguments to prove a thing, which muſt be acknowledged, before the Arguments can have any force, or even be as much as certainly underſtood? And if they tell me, that the Fathers, and ancient Chriſtian Writers, do teſtifie thus much of the Church of *Rome*; I can only ſay, that the Proteſtant Divines (who

ſeem to me to be Men of as much Learning and Integrity as the *Romiſh)* do declare, that it is far otherwiſe. Nor have I Skill enough in Language and Antiquity, to take upon me to judge of this Diſpute. Neither do I underſtand, by what Authority the Writings of thoſe Perſons, who are acknowledged to have been ſubject to Errours, ſhould be obtruded on me as a Rule of my Faith,. or as a ſufficient Argument to determine my Aſſent in ſo weighty a Matter. *Secondly*, Suppoſing, but not granting, that in the Church of *Rome* the true and pure Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt was preſerved; yet ſtill it is granted, that particular and private Men,

Men, who live in the visible Communion of that Church, may teach false and corrupt Doctrine. Here then I demand, How shall I certainly distinguish the Doctrine of the Church, from the Opinions of private Men? And how shall I certainly know what is the true Meaning of the Church's Doctrine? They of the Church of *Rome* are not agreed who it is, that has Authority to declare and expound the Doctrine of their Church; whether it be the Pope, or a General Council; or neither alone, but both together. Or if they were unanimous in this Point, yet how shall I know whether such a particular Person, who possesses the Chair, be a true

and lawful Pope; or such a particular Assembly, a true and lawful General Council? Or, Suppose they could satisfie me in this Demand, yet there is no Council now sitting; nor, if there were, could I go to them, or to the Pope, to receive Instruction; nor can the Pope, or a Council, be at leisure to satisfie the Demands of every private Enquirer. How then can I be sure that this or that particular Person does both rightly understand, and faithfully propose the Doctrine of the Church to me? Especially, since there have been, and still are, eminent Members of the Church of *Rome*, who have accused each other of corrupt Doctrine, and even

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of Hereſie it ſelf. But, *Thirdly and Laſtly*, There do appear to me to be much ſtronger Arguments to prove that the Church of *Rome* has actually erred, and corrupted the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, (in the Caſe of Tranſubſtantiation, and ſome other her Tenents,) than any that can be brought, to prove her to be infallible. And until I can be otherwiſe convinced, I cannot but conclude, That *to follow the Guidance of the* Roman *Church, is not the way to embrace the true and pure Doctrine of Jeſus.*

XXII. Some there are who tell me, that, to find out the true and genuine Doctrine of Jeſus, I muſt have recourſe to the Tradition of the Church:

And thus they ſet forth the Matter. *Firſt*, They ſuppoſe that the true and genuine Doctrine of Jeſus was undoubtedly taught by his Apoſtles, and firſt Diſciples. *Secondly*, That if any one did, or ſhould have gone about to ſpread any falſe or ſpurious Doctrine, whilſt theſe Apoſtles and Diſciples were yet alive; They who were ſent on purpoſe, by Jeſus, to preach his Doctrine, and were owned, and ſubmitted to accordingly by all Chriſtian Churches, both could and would immediately convince all Churches of the falſeneſs or ſpuriouſneſs of ſuch pretended Doctrine. *Thirdly*, That the Doctrine of Jeſus being in all Churches publick-

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ly and conſtantly taught and preached, every ſucceeding Age and Generation muſt needs know, and could not poſſibly be ignorant, what their Fathers, and immediate Predeceſſors owned and taught as ſuch. *Fourthly*, That therefore, if, at any time whatſoever, any new or ſpurious Doctrine was, or ſhould be, vented, by any Perſon or Perſons, as the Doctrine of Jeſus, all Chriſtians muſt preſently know that this was none of his Doctrine, becauſe it was not taught them as ſuch, by their immediate Predeceſſors. *Fifthly*, That therefore it is impoſſible that any new and ſpurious Doctrine could ever be broached in the World, as a

part

part of the Doctrine of Jesus, but it must needs meet with great Opposition: For all Christians do maintain, That it is a Sin to teach, or knowingly to own, any thing as the Doctrine of Jesus, which is not really so. *Sixthly*, That however some Men, out of Pride or Interest, may own and contend for any such novel Doctrines, yet it is impossible that any such Doctrine should ever come to be universally received by the whole Church, except we could suppose, either that the whole Church should joyn together to involve themselves and their Posterity for ever in a Sin; or else, that a few Men, who first should vent an Opinion, could so impose upon the whole

whole World, as to make them believe, that what they all muſt know to be a new and upſtart thing (becauſe they received it not from their Fathers and Predeceſſors) was a part of the ancient Doctrine of Jeſus, which was all along, from Hand to Hand, delivered down to them: Both which things are abſurd to conceive or imagine. And *Laſtly*, That no part of the Doctrine of Jeſus, once delivered, could ever be obliterated, or wholly forgot in the World; becauſe every Age of Chriſtians, from the very firſt, who undoubtedly received the whole and entire Doctrine of Jeſus, knew themſelves to be indiſpenſably obliged, both by God's

God's Command, and alſo by that Love and Charity which they owed to their Poſterity, to teach the ſame full and entire Doctrine which they received, unto their Children, and thoſe who were to come after them. Go therefore to the Church (that is, to the Church of *Rome*, ſay the Papiſts; to the Univerſal Church, *i. e.* to all Chriſtians, ſay ſome Proteſtants,) and ſee what are the Doctrines which are, and have been univerſally maintained; of whoſe Beginning no other Account can be given, but that Jeſus and his Apoſtles taught them to the World: And there you have the entire and uncorrupted Doctrine of Jeſus. But to this I anſwer,

That,

That, indeed, where there is an univerſal, or a very large and general Tradition concerning any thing; and where, from the nature of the thing it ſelf, it appears to be highly rational and probable, that there is not, or could not be, any Errour or Miſtake in the matter; in ſuch a Caſe as this, no Man, I think, but an obſtinate Sceptick, will offer to withſtand the Evidence of ſuch a Tradition. But, let a Tradition be ever ſo general, or even univerſal; yet, if it can be ſhewn, that there is not only a poſſibility, but alſo a fair likelihood, and probability, that there may be a miſtake in the buſineſs; then, I think, no Man can juſtly be blamed, if he

he refuſes or ſuſpends his Aſſent, until the Teſtimony of ſuch a Tradition be cleared and vindicated from thoſe rational Prejudices and Exceptions which may lie againſt it. Now, if it were ſo, that all Errours and Miſtakes did ever immediately appear in their perfect Form, and full Growth, at their very Beginning; then it were moſt rational to conclude, that all Men muſt needs take notice of their firſt Appearance; and conſequently, that, in all likelihood, any ſuch Errour muſt needs meet with many more Opponents, than Abettors. But, on the contrary; it may well be ſuppoſed, that Errours may have ſprung up in the World, from ſuch

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ſmall beginnings, and by ſuch ſlow and unperceivable degrees, that, after ſome Ages, it may be impoſſible for a Man to diſcover them to be Errours, except he has ſome other Rule, beſides Tradition, to try them by; *viz.* either the Rule of common Reaſon, or ſome ancient and unaltered Writing. As for Example: Is it not rational to conceive, that, in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, they who preached and writ popular Diſcourſes, might, very innocently, and to good purpoſe, make uſe of Rhetorical Flights, and Figurative Expreſſions, to ſtrike the Fancies, and move the Affections of the People to Vertue and Piety? And is it not likely enough, That thoſe who

who came after them, might not only ſtrive to imitate, but alſo to out-do them, in bolder Flights, and more ſtrained Schemes of Expreſſion? And is it not alſo probable enough, That, in long proceſs of Time, Ignorance, generally over-ſpreading the Face of the World, and being joined with a profound Veneration for thoſe ancient Preachers and Writers, might begin to interpret ſome of theſe Rhetorical and Figurative Expreſſions in a Literal and Logical Sence; and then conceive, that ſuch their Interpretations were really and truly the ancient Doctrines delivered down to them? Eſpecially if we conſider, that there may have been

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ſome Men of great Power and Repute in the World, who might have taken a pride and delight, or whoſe Intereſt it might have been, to amuze the People with myſterious Notions and Fancies, and to keep them ignorant of the Truth. And thus it appears to be, not only poſſible, but alſo probable enough, That Errours and Miſtakes, as to the ancient Doctrine of Jeſus, might come to be generally received, without any conſiderable or notorious Oppoſition given to them; or that ſuch Oppoſition might ſoon be ſuppreſſed and over-ruled by the Power and Reputation of ſuch prevailing Men. From all which I can but conclude,

That

That *though the general Tradition or Teſtimony of the Church may be a good Help, yet it may not always be a certain Rule, to lead me to the entire, and unaltered Doctrine of Jeſus.*

XXIII. Others there are, who tell me, That, to find out the true and entire Doctrine of Jeſus, I muſt apply my ſelf to the holy Scripture; that is to ſay, to the Books commonly called the *Old*, and the *New Teſtament*. And becauſe I look upon this to be the right Way, I ſhall briefly and plainly deliver my Thoughts, in relation to theſe Books. And firſt, of the *New Teſtament*. That the *New Teſtament*, as it was extant in the Greek Tongue, has been ever univerſally owned by

by all Christians, as containing a true (though some deny it to be a full) Account of the Life and Doctrine of Jesus, is a thing so notorious, and so universally acknowledged, that I cannot find the least Ground or Reason to question it. Now the History and Doctrine of Jesus being so well known unto the first Christians, by the Preaching of his Apostles and Disciples; and they being so ready, upon all Occasions, to lay down their Lives for the Truth of Christianity; it cannot be imagined that ever they would so readily and universally receive and own such a Book, if it had contained any thing in it which was dissonant from that Doctrine which they

they had received. It is confeſſed, indeed, that ſome of thoſe Books which make up the Volume of the *New Teſtament*, (that is to ſay, the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, that of St. *James*, the Second of St. *Peter*, that of St. *Jude*, the Second and Third of St. *John*, and the *Revelations*,) were not ſo ſoon, and ſo univerſally received, throughout the Chriſtian Church, as the reſt of the Books were. The Reaſon of which, apparently, was not, That theſe Books contained any thing in them contrary to what was delivered in the other Books of the *New Teſtament*, (for he that reads the whole, will plainly find, that there is a very compleat Agree-

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ment between them; the only ſeeming Diſcord, of St. *Paul*'s Juſtification by Faith, and St. *James*'s Juſtification by Works, being exactly and fully reconciled, by conſidering, That St. *Paul* means no other Faith, but ſuch as worketh by Love, *Gal.* 5. 6. and St. *James*, no other Works, but ſuch as proceed from Faith; *Jam.* 2. 22.) But becauſe it was not at firſt univerſally known, who were the Authors of them. Which abundantly ſhews the Care and Caution of the Chriſtian Church, in not being haſty to receive and admit any Books, as authentick Records of their Doctrine, without very good Warrant for ſo doing. And therefore, ſince theſe ſame

Books

Books were, in a very little time after, received, and owned to be of equal Authority with the reſt of the *New Teſtament*; I cannot but from thence conclude, That thoſe Churches which, at the firſt, doubted concerning theſe Books, did ſoon receive moſt full and ample Satisfaction in that matter, from thoſe who had before received them. I conclude therefore, That *the Book of the* New Teſtament, *as it was extant in the Primitive Times, in the Greek Tongue, did contain a true Account of the Doctrine of Jeſus.*

XXIV. That innumerable Copies of the *New Teſtament* were, in a very little time, diſperſed through all places where

where Chriſtianity was planted; That it has been, at different times, and in very diſtant places, tranſlated into all (or almoſt all) Languages; And that Copies, both of the Original, and many of the ſeveral Tranſlations, have been preſerved with much Care, in a great many diſtant Parts of the World, is allowed by all, and denied by none. From whence I think we may gather, *Firſt*, That *where the Generality of the Greek Copies of the* New Teſtament *do agree in the very ſame Words, there we have, undoubtedly, the true and authentick Words of the* New Teſtament. For, although ſome Miſtakes might creep into ſome Copies, either through

the Wickedneſs or Negligence of ſome particular Men; yet, where ſo many Copies of a Book have been ſo carefully preſerved, and in ſuch diſtant Parts of the World, it is not to be imagined, that the ſelf-ſame Errour, in any Expreſſion, ſhould ever be propagated through the Generality of them. Secondly, That *where the Words or Expreſſions of divers Greek Copies do differ one from another; yet if the Senſe and Meaning be exactly the ſame in all, or almoſt all; there we have certainly the true Senſe and Meaning of the* New Teſtament. For it is eaſie to apprehend, that a Tranſcriber might, by a ſmall Miſtake, put one Word or Expreſſion of the ſame

ſame Signification, inſtead of another: But that the ſame Senſe ſhould be punctually preſerved in all, or almoſt all, Copies, is not to be imagined, except it were the true Senſe delivered from the Beginning. Thirdly, That *if there may be found any different Readings in divers Copies of the* New Teſtament, *which diſagree in Senſe, as well as in Words,* (which ſcarce ever happens in any thing which is accounted a material Point of Religion) *then it ſeems to be moſt fit and proper to admit of that Reading and Senſe which beſt agrees with the Tenour of the whole; with the ancienteſt, and beſt eſteemed Tranſlations; and with the evident Principles of ſound Reaſon.*

And if any place be ſo obſcure, as that none of theſe Ways will afford any Light into its Meaning, then I think that no ſtreſs ought to be laid upon it in any neceſſary part of Religion.

XXV. But ſome will demand, How are we ſure of the Senſe and Meaning, even of thoſe places of the *New Teſtament*, where there is no difference about the Words? In Anſwer to this, I have already ſhewn, (§. 21.) that we are not to follow the Guidance of the Church of *Rome*, to know the true Doctrine of Jeſus; Nor therefore, conſequently, to know the true Meaning of the *New Teſtament*, in which his Doctrine is owned to be contained. I have ſhewn alſo,

(§. 22.)

(§. 22.) That though general Tradition may be a good Help, yet may it not always be a certain Rule to lead one to the unaltered Doctrine of Jesus; nor therefore, consequently, to the true and genuine Interpretation of the *New Testament*. Since therefore there is no other way to be found, I conclude, That *the* New Testament *is to be interpreted the same way that other Books are*; that is, by considering the Sense and Propriety of the Words and Sentences, and the ordinary Figures of Speech, as they are commonly used in the same Book, and in others written in the same Language, and about the same time; together with the Scope,

Drift, Coherence, and Occaſion of the Diſcourſe. *To which End, every Man that is learned,* being bound to uſe his beſt Endeavour to know the Will of God, (as I have ſhewn, §. 14.) *is obliged, according to the meaſure of his Learning, to conſult Lexicons, Commentators, and ancient Writers, and to uſe all other Helps*; that he may both ſatisfie himſelf, and alſo be able to inform others.

XXVI. But perhaps I ſhall be told, That when a Man has done all this, to the beſt of his power, yet, after all, he may be miſtaken; as it appears, that many Learned Men are; ſince they oppoſe and contradict one another about the Meaning of the *New Teſtament*. To this I anſwer,

ſwer, That ſince I have ſhewn, (§. 3.) that all neceſſary things (whether as to Belief, or Practice) in Religion, are eaſie to be underſtood; I muſt from hence conclude, That *a ſober and honeſt Enquirer cannot eaſily be miſtaken in the Interpretation of thoſe places of the* New Teſtament, *which do contain any neceſſary part of Religion.* And as for other parts and paſſages of it; if Men would be but peaceable, (which is plainly enough commanded in the *New Teſtament,*) their Miſtakes about them could do no harm. And, again; Since I have ſhewn, (§. 14.) That God requires no more from a Man, but his beſt Endeavours to know and perform his Will;

I do hence conclude, That *if a Man be miſtaken in his Interpretation even of any ſuch place as contains ſome neceſſary part of Religion; yet, if this Miſtake be purely an Errour of the Underſtanding, and does not proceed from any Neglect, or wilful Fault of the Perſon ſo miſtaking; God will never be offended with him for it.* And then, What hurt can there be in ſuch a Miſtake as this?

XXVII. But it may be demanded, What ſhall they do to find out the Meaning of the *New Teſtament*, who do not underſtand any thing of the Greek, which is the only authentick Language of this Book? Which is evidently the Caſe of much the greateſt part of

of Mankind. I anſwer, That *he who is ignorant of the Greek Tongue*, being yet obliged to uſe his beſt Endeavour, (§. 14.) *muſt do the beſt he can, by reading ſome Tranſlation, or Tranſlations of it; (or, if he cannot read himſelf, by hearing them read;) and by asking and enquiring from ſuch of his Acquaintance as he believes to be Perſons of Sincerity and Knowledge, to know what is the Senſe and Doctrine of the* New Teſtament, *and the Will of God therein contained.* And, ſince God requires no more from any Man, but his beſt Endeavour, (§. 14.) it follows, That *if ſuch a Man be miſtaken, and cannot help it, God will not be offended with him neither for it.*

XXVIII. And one thing more let me add, for the ſake of thoſe who are not skilled in the Greek Tongue; *viz.* That ſince there have many Tranſlations been made of the *New Teſtament*, moſt of them by Perſons well skilled in Languages, of good Repute for their Honeſty and Integrity, and who could not but know before-hand, that their Tranſlations would be narrowly ſifted and examined by learned Men; (which muſt needs make them careful to commit as few Faults as they could;) and ſince all thoſe things which God requires from Men, muſt needs be eaſie enough to be underſtood, (§ 3.) and therefore eaſie to be tranſlated and expreſſed

preſſed in any Language; I cannot but conclude, That *a ſober and impartial Enquirer may be very well aſſured of the Doctrine of Jeſus, even from the Tranſlations of the* New Teſtament, *though he does not underſtand the Greek Original.* And, for as much as I can underſtand of the matter, if Men did ſtand only upon the honeſt and downright Senſe and Meaning of plain Places, (which only can give us good Aſſurance in Religion,) and would not quarrel about critical Niceties in ſuch Texts as are confeſſedly obſcure, I believe there is ſcarce any Tranſlation of the *New Teſtament* ſo defective, but might be a ſufficient Guide to any ſober Man, to lead

lead him to the Doctrine of Jesus.

XXIX. Having thus spoken what I designed of the *New Testament*, I come to say something of the *Old*. And here, that the *Jews*, in the Days of Jesus, had among them a Book, written in the *Hebrew*, and some small part of it in the *Chaldee*-Tongue, which we now call the *Old Testament*, which they called the *Holy Scripture*, and esteemed as the Word of God, is a thing beyond dispute. That this Book was owned and acknowledged, quoted and referred to, and all People exhorted and encouraged to search and study it, as the Word of God, both by Jesus himself, and also by his Disciples,

ſciples, is moſt evident to any one who reads the *New Teſtament*. From whence I muſt conclude, That *the Doctrine of that Book, as it was then extant, is to be eſteemed as part of the Doctrine of Jeſus; and that thoſe Laws and Commands which are there to be found, are to be kept and obſerved by all Chriſtians, the Followers of Jeſus; except where it can be ſhewn that Jeſus has freed us from the Obligation of them.*

XXX. Moreover, ſince this Book has been tranſlated into as many Languages, and as many Copies of the Original have been carefully kept, in diſtant Parts of the World, as of the *New Teſtament*; I do conclude, That *the very ſame things*

things which juſt now were ſaid concerning the Words, the Meaning, and Way of interpreting the New Teſtament, *will hold good concerning the* Old Teſtament *alſo, as far as they can be accommodated to it.*

XXXI. There are ſome certain Books and Fragments, which among the Proteſtants are well known by the Name of *Apocryphal*, to which the Papiſts give the Title of *Deutero-canonical.* Theſe Pieces the Papiſts contend to be a real part of the *Old Teſtament*, and of equal Authority with the other Books of it: But the Proteſtants will not allow their Authority to be ſacred, although they grant that there are many uſeful and profitable things con-

contained in them. Now, he that is not able to ſearch into Antiquity, for the Reſolving of this Controverſie, may by another way be ſatisfied about it. For, ſince the *Jews* (from whom the Chriſtians originally received the Scriptures of the *Old Teſtament*) do all of them, and ever did, unanimouſly reject theſe ſame *Apocryphal* Books and Fragments, as being no part of their Holy Scripture; I think it may from hence be ſufficiently concluded, That, *as to the Controverſie about the Apocryphal Scripture, the Proteſtants are in the right, and the Papiſts in the wrong.* And yet, if the Authority of thoſe Pieces were as great as the Papiſts would have

have it, I ſee not how it could make any Alteration in my Religion. For I do not find any thing in them, but what is eaſily reconcilable with the reſt of the holy Scripture.

XXXII. But there are ſome Difficulties which ſeem to ariſe concerning what I have diſcourſed, to which it will be neceſſary to give a full and ſatisfactory Anſwer. And, *Firſt*, If all be granted that has hitherto been ſaid; yet, how ſhall I be ſure that the Book of the holy Scriptures contains, not only truly, but alſo fully and entirely, the Doctrine of Jeſus; ſo that nothing is to be eſteemed as a part of his Religion, but what is contained in the Scripture? To this I might

might anſwer, That there are ſeveral Paſſages in the Scripture it ſelf, which do give us to underſtand, that the whole Law and Will of God, as far as it is needful for Man to know them, are contained in thoſe holy Writings; (as the Proteſtant Divines do ſufficiently make appear, in the Management of this Controverſie againſt the Papiſts.) But, waving this, I think it is enough to ſay, That *it is not, indeed, impoſſible in it ſelf, but that Jeſus might have made known other Particulars of Doctrine, and of the Will of God, beſides what is conſigned to us by the Scripture. And if any Man can effectually prove, that any ſuch Doctrine or Precept was delivered by him; I think,*

I think, that whoſoever is convinced of the Proof, ought to believe that Doctrine, and obey that Precept, which appear to be ſo delivered. But he that does his hearty and ſincere Endeavour to find out the Doctrine and Will of God, delivered to Man by Jeſus, and is not able, with all his Diligence, to diſcover any more of it, than what is recorded in the Scripture; if he faithfully keeps and obſerves as much of it as he is able there to diſcover, it is plain that God requires no more from him, (§. 14.) and therefore certainly will not puniſh him, for want of any thing farther.

XXXIII. *Secondly*, It may be objected, That in Reading theſe Books, there do appear to be ſome Paſſages which are in them-

themſelves abſurd, and contrary to the plain Dictates of every Man's Reaſon and Underſtanding; and ſome which are irreconcilable with one another. Now, that the Doctrine of Jeſus is certainly true, muſt be allowed, becauſe it is confirmed by God. That both parts of a Contradiction cannot be true, is acknowledged by all Men: And no Man, I think, can own that for a Truth, which is contrary to the plain Dictates of his Reaſon and Underſtanding; which to every Man is, and muſt be, the Standard of all Truth whatſoever. For there can be no Reaſon why any Man receives and owns any thing for a Truth, but only becauſe he

he apprehends it to be conformable unto the plain and ſelf-evident Notions which are already planted in his Mind. Here then it may be demanded how it can be poſſible that theſe Scriptures ſhould contain the *true* and *uncorrupted* Doctrine and Religion of Jeſus? To this I anſwer: *Firſt*, That *I cannot find any appearance of a Contradiction, throughout the Holy Scriptures, in any Point of Doctrine, or Rule of Manners, but what is ſo eaſie and obvious to be reconciled*, that no Man, I think, of Candour and Ingenuity, but would be aſhamed to object it. *Secondly*, And, *as for thoſe few ſeeming Diſcordances, which do occurr in the Circumſtances of ſome Hiſtorical Nar-*

Narrations; though I, perhaps, am not able to reconcile them, yet it may be that the things themſelves may not be abſolutely irreconcilable. But ſuppoſe they were, yet it is no derogation to the Truth of the Hiſtory, (as to the main ſubſtance of it,) or of the Doctrine contained in the holy Scriptures, that ſome of the Sacred Writers have been miſtaken in the Relation of ſome ſmall and inconſiderable Circumſtances. There are ſeveral Hiſtorians and Chroniclers, which give an Account of the Life and Reign of many of our Kings of *England*; and although they differ in many Circumſtances of things, yet this was never made an Argument to doubt of the Truth of

the

the main Hiſtory, wherein they all agree. And why may not the Scripture-Hiſtorians be as favourably cenſured as all other Hiſtorians in the World are? *Thirdly*, There are many things which are above my Reaſon and Underſtanding, which I cannot comprehend in my Mind, nor frame a clear and diſtinct Notion of; which yet I cannot ſay, are contrary to my Reaſon: Becauſe (though they are above my reach, yet) I do not find that they do contradict any of thoſe plain and ſelf-evident Principles which are implanted in my Underſtanding. For Example, I am not able diſtinctly to apprehend how the ſmalleſt Particle of Matter, which can be aſ-

ſigned,

ſigned, is yet in it ſelf capable of being for ever divided; ſo that no part of Matter, though ever ſo ſmall, can ever be ſo much as conceived to be abſolutely indiviſible. And yet this is ſo far from being contrary to my Reaſon, that my Reaſon it ſelf does fully ſatisfie me that the thing is ſo, though I am not able to comprehend the manner of it. The ſame thing alſo may be ſaid concerning the neceſſity of ſome thing being without any Beginning. (of which, ſee §. 5, 6.) Now, *if I meet with any thing in Scripture which is thus above my Reaſon, but not contrary to it, I cannot refuſe my Aſſent unto it.* (I mean always, upon a Supposition that the Words do appear

pear evidently to carry ſuch a Senſe.) For I cannot conclude ſuch a thing to be impoſſible: Becauſe I do not find it contrary to my Reaſon, though above it. And if it be a thing in my Apprehenſion poſſible, I muſt believe it to be true, when I find that God has declared it ſo to be. Other things, again, there are, which are directly contrary unto thoſe ſelf-evident Notions and Principles, which my Reaſon finds to be connatural with it ſelf. For Example; That *a Part is equal to the Whole*; and ſuch like Abſurdities. Now, *if any* ſuch *Propoſitions* as theſe, *which are contrary to my Reaſon, ſhould occurr to me in Scripture, I cannot poſſibly believe them to*

be

be true in a Literal Senſe; (for that were to renounce the clear Dictates of my Reaſon and Underſtanding, upon which the Certainty of all things which I believe or know, is ultimately built; and without which, I could have no Certainty of the Being of God, or the Truth of any Religion;) *and therefore I muſt needs underſtand them to be meant figuratively.* And that Figure which beſt agrees to ſuch Words, according to the moſt common Cuſtom of Speech, and is moſt conformable to common Senſe and Reaſon, I think, is always to be preferred. I never read any Book, to my knowledge, but in it I found many Expreſſions which, taken literally

and ſtrictly, were abſurd and ridiculous; but, taken figuratively, as 'tis evident they were intended, did contain very good Senſe and Meaning. Since then the Holy Scriptures were written in ſuch Words and Expreſſions as were commonly uſed among Men in Speaking and Writing, why ſhould we think that ſtrange in them, which is ſo uſual in all other Books?

XXXIV. *Thirdly*, It may be objected, That this Doctrine which I have taught, leaves every Man entirely to his own Reaſon and Underſtanding, to find out the true Religion, and the Way to Heaven. Now, ſince there is ſo great a difference between the Notions and Sen-

Sentiments of different Men, it muſt needs follow, that, all Men being left wholly to themſelves, there muſt neceſſarily be great Variety, and even Contrariety, of Opinions among them concerning Religion. And if God requires no more from every Man, but to do his beſt Endeavour, and to chuſe that way which he thinks to be the trueſt; from hence it will follow, That two Men who are contrary one to another in the Point of Religion, may yet both be in the right Way to Heaven; and a *Turk*, or a Heathen, may be ſaved, as well as a Chriſtian, if they are but ſtrongly perſuaded that they are in the right. I anſwer; *Firſt*, That if the

Objection means, that I leave every Man to his own Reaſon and Underſtanding, without any other help, to find out the Truth of Religion, it is a miſtake. For I have aſſerted, That every Man, according to the Meaſure of his Learning, ought to make uſe of all the Means and Helps he can, to underſtand the Scriptures, and the Will of God. (See §. 14. and §. 25.) But if the Meaning be, That *I leave every Man to chuſe that Religion which, after a ſerious Enquiry, appears to him to be the beſt*; (which is all that I contend for;) In this I ſay no more than what all Men muſt, and do, ſay, as well as I. For, either a Man muſt never enquire into the Truth

Truth of his Religion at all, (and then he chuſes his Religion by mere chance; and ſince there are many falſe Religions, and but one true, 'tis great odds but he lights upon a wrong one;) Or, if he does enquire, either he muſt chuſe that which he thinks not to be the beſt, (and then he acts againſt his Conſcience,) or that which he thinks is the beſt; Which is what I aſſert, and what every Man of Senſe profeſſes himſelf to do. *Secondly*, As there are many Differences in the Notions and Sentiments of Men, concerning thoſe things which are, in ſome meaſure, abſtruſe and obſcure; ſo, on the other ſide, there are many things ſo appa-

rent, and evident, that Men who are ſincere and unbyaſſed, if they have but common Senſe, can never differ about them: Amongſt which, I think, I may reckon all thoſe things which God requires of neceſſity to any Man's Salvation (§. 3.) And whereas the World has, for theſe many Years, found, that compelling Men to this or that Religion, contrary to their own Sentiments, has been ſo far from begetting Unity of any ſort, that, on the contrary, it has even diſtracted Mankind, not only with Variety of Opinions, (each Party taking a delight to thwart other,) but alſo with War and Confuſion; If every Man were left to himſelf, to follow

follow what Religion he pleaſes, (as he ſhall anſwer to God for his Sincerity,) it is very probable that moſt Men, having no Worldly Intereſt to ſerve by this or that Religion, would, in time, be brought to agree in all the great and neceſſary Truths of Religion; which are plain and evident to every ſober and inquiſitive Perſon. And as for things not abſolutely neceſſary, and of an inferiour ſort, (as I have ſaid, §. 26.) if Men would be but peaceable, their Miſtakes, and conſequently their Differences about them, could do no great harm. But if Men will ſtill differ even about the eſſential and neceſſary Parts of Religion, I know no Remedy for

it upon Earth; but muſt refer the Matter wholly to the Judgment of God in Heaven. *Thirdly*, I do not maintain, That he who is in an Errour, that is, a *Turk*, or an Heathen, (whatever the ſtrength and ſincerity of his Perſuaſion may be,) is in as ſure a Way to Heaven and Salvation, as he who is an Orthodox-Man, and a Chriſtian. How God will deal with thoſe that are miſtaken, and cannot help it, I do not determine. All that I would inſinuate (§. 14.) is, That he will not puniſh any Man for any Errour, or Miſtake, which he falls into, through a pure Defect of his Underſtanding, and not through any Fault or Neglect of

of his Will. But how far he will reward ſuch a Perſon for his good Meaning, is more than I can tell.

XXXV. *Fourthly*, It may be objected, That this Doctrine does, in effect, undermine and enervate the Force and Power of all Civil Government, by opening a Way for all Malefactors to eſcape Puniſhment, how great ſoever their Crimes may be. If ſuch a Perſon ſhould plead thus for himſelf, That he was fully perſuaded in his Mind and Conſcience, that it was the Will of God, that he ſhould commit ſuch a Theft, or Murther, of which he is accuſed; and that therefore, according to this Doctrine, it was his Duty, in the

ſight of God, to act according to this Perſuaſion; The Magiſtrate, who knows not the Hearts of Men, can never be able certainly to diſcover, but that this is a real Truth, that he was ſo perſuaded. And if every Man, in all the Duties of Religion, is bound to act according to his own Senſe and Perſuaſion of Things; with what Conſcience can a Magiſtrate puniſh ſuch a Perſon for that Fact, which, for ought he knows, it was his Duty to commit? I will not ſay, but that it may ſo fall out, that a Man may think it to be his Duty to commit the moſt horrid Villainies, ſince Jeſus Chriſt himſelf aſſures his Diſciples, That the Time would come, that

that whoſo killed them, would think he did God Service, *Joh.* 16. 2. And how far God Almighty will be merciful unto ſuch Perſons who commit ſuch Facts out of pure Ignorance, and not out of Malice, I had rather St. *Paul* ſhould determine than I. (See 1 *Tim.* 1. 13.) But to the Objection, I think it ſufficient to anſwer, That the Civil Magiſtrate, as well as other Men, is bound to act according to the cleareſt Conviction, and ſtrongeſt Perſuaſion of his own Mind. If therefore, upon the Examination of all Circumſtances, he be well ſatisfied, and really believes, that ſuch a Plea from a Malefactor is no real Truth; but only a mere Trick, and Pretence,

tence, in hopes to escape Punishment; he ought to take no notice of it, but to pronounce his Sentence according to the Law. But that which comes up close to the Objection, and which, I think, is the fullest and truest Answer, is this; *viz.* That *the Civil Magistrate has nothing to do to enquire or regard how the Matter stands between God and the Conscience of the Transgressor of the Law of the Land, so as to be thereby any way influenced in the Passing his Judgment.* It is enough to him, if he be well and throughly convinced, that the Laws by which he acts, are no way contrary to the known Law of God. There are many Cases wherein

in a Man offends highly against the Law of God, in which the Civil Magistrate has no Power to inflict any Punishment on the Offender; because the Fault which he may have committed, does not, it may be, any way tend to the damage or disturbance of the Civil Society; Which, and which only, is committed to the Care of the Magistrate. Such, for Example, are many Acts of Covetousness, or of Prodigality, and other Sins; against which it is not possible to provide by any Humane Laws. And, on the other side, There are some Cases, wherein a Man may stand absolved before the Tribunal of God, and yet be very justly condemned.

ned by the Magiſtrate. Thus, for inſtance, If a Man has committed Theft or Murther, and, upon a ſincere and hearty Repentance, has obtained the Pardon of his Sins from God; yet, nevertheleſs, if ſuch a Perſon be accuſed, and legally convicted, of ſuch Crimes before the Civil Magiſtrate; He not only may, but ought to put the Law of the Land in Execution againſt him, though he believes him to be ever ſo penitent; That it may be a Terrour unto others. For, if this ought not to be done, every Malefactor, by a pretence of Repentance, (which cannot certainly be diſcovered by any but God,) might eſcape the Laſh of the Law: By which Means

Means all wicked Men would be encouraged to commit all ſorts of Crimes. Thus alſo when the Children of *Iſrael* were commanded by God to conquer the Land of *Canaan*, we read how they ſent Spies to make a Diſcovery of the Land, that they might the more eaſily invade it. Now it is moſt certain, that theſe Spies did nothing but what they had God Almighty's Warrant for; and yet, if they had been taken by any of the *Canaanitiſh* Magiſtrates, and legally convicted of their Deſign; Who doubts but that it had been lawful for them to have puniſhed them, according to the Law of War, and the Law of Nations? For it is none

of

of the Magiſtrates Buſineſs, to enquire who keeps or tranſgreſſes the Laws of God; (for the Law of God extends to many Caſes, where the Magiſtrate's Authority has nothing to do;) but they who tranſgreſs the Laws of the Land, and thereby diſturb the Peace of the Commonwealth, are, upon a due Conviction, to be puniſhed by the Magiſtrate, (without any farther Enquiry;) it being his Buſineſs to do every thing which appears to be neceſſary for the Preſervation of the Weal-Publick, provided that he does nothing which is contrary to the known Laws of God, who is the ſupreme King and Lord of all.

XXXVI.

XXXVI. But *Fifthly*, it will be objected, That whatever becomes of the civil Magiſtrate's Power, yet this Doctrine, which here is taught, muſt certainly defeat and cancel all that Authority with which the Church is endowed and inveſted. For, though the civil Magiſtrate has no more to look after but onely the Peace and Preſervation of the Common-Wealth; yet ſurely it is the Duty of the Church to take Cognizance of thoſe things which are committed merely againſt the Law of God. But how can the Church call any Man to an Account for any Sin or Tranſgreſſion, when a Man may plead for himſelf, That he thought

thought it was his Duty; which Plea, if really true (and who but God can disprove it?) is sufficient, according to this Doctrine, to justifie him before God; and consequently to indemnifie him from all Censures of the Church. To this I answer, That the Authority of the Church (*i. e.* of a Christian Society) is twofold: *viz.* Either that Authority wherewith it is invested immediately by God, or that which is conferred on it by the civil Laws and Constitutions of the Kingdom or Commonwealth. The latter of these is a civil Authority, though exercised by Ecclesiastical Persons, because it is derived altogether from the civil

civil Power; And therefore, the Conſideration of it muſt be referred to what is but now ſaid touching the civil Magiſtrate. But as for that Authority which is given to the Church immediately by God; it is evidently no more than this, *viz.* An Authority to preach the Goſpel, and to perſwade Men every where to receive it; and an Authority to exclude thoſe Men out of the Society (that is, out of the viſible Communion of it) who do not profeſs the true Chriſtian Faith, and live according to the Chriſtian Law. Other Authority than this does not appear to be given to the Church by God. And nothing that I have ſaid, does in the

the leaſt tend to abridge them any way as to the Exerciſe of this Power. *The Church may and ought to preach the Goſpel, and perſwade Men to embrace it. And however any Man may be excuſed before God by invincible Ignorance, yet he is not to be ſuffered in the viſible Communion of the Church, if he does not believe and live as a Chriſtian.*

XXXVII. *Sixthly*, it may be objected that I have ſeveral times in this Diſcourſe made uſe of a Diſtinction, which Diſtinction is nevertheleſs render'd altogether uſeleſs and impertinent by the main Deſign of the Diſcourſe it ſelf. The Diſtinction is between *neceſſary* Matters of Religion and

and ſuch as are *not neceſſary.* (which is referred to, §. 26. and elſewhere) But if no Man can be obliged in any Matter of Religion, any farther than to do his beſt Endeavour, from thence it muſt follow, That all things are alike neceſſary in Religion. For whatſoever is within a Man's Power, according to this Doctrine, is neceſſary for him; and whatſoever is not within his Power is not neceſſary; ſo that the very ſame thing may be neceſſary in Reſpect of one Man, and not neceſſary in Reſpect of another; which confounds the Diſtinction and renders it uſeleſs. To this I anſwer, That *by things neceſſary I mean all ſuch as it is a Sin for a Man*

to

to be ignorant of, if the Knowledge of them be within his Power. Such as are, That *Jeſus is the Son of God*, That *God is to be worſhipped*, &c. *By things not neceſſary, I mean, Such as a Man is not obliged ſo much as to ſearch after; the Ignorance whereof ſhall not be accounted ſinful before God, although it might have been in a Man's Power to have known them.* Such are a great many curious Speculations, which Divines do trouble themſelves and the World with; which they themſelves do yet confeſs, are not neceſſary to any Man's Salvation; and conſequently, which a Man is no more obliged to trouble his Head with, than with any Pro-

Problems, either in Geometry, or Natural Philoſophy.

XXXVIII. *Seventhly*, It may be objected, That this Doctrine muſt needs encourage Men to continue in their Ignorance, and not to take any Care or Pains to inform themſelves concerning the Truth of Religion, or any of the Duties of it. For, Why ſhould a Man take any Pains to get more Knowledge, (which will, it may be, bring Trouble in the Practice of it,) when Ignorance is no manner of Bar to his Salvation? For, let him but live according to the Knowledge which he already has, and God, it ſeems, requires no more from him. To this I anſwer, That *for a Man*

Man to act according to the best of his Knowledge, will not serve his turn; except he has used his best Endeavour, by all Means, to know and understand the Will of God as perfectly as He can. (as I have shewn, all Men are bound to do, §. 14.) Which, though it is a Comfort to those who are ignorant, and cannot help it; yet is no manner of Encouragement or Excuse for those whose Ignorance is their own Fault or Neglect.

XXXIX. My Reason having thus brought me to embrace the Christian Religion, and directed me where and how to seek for the particular Doctrines of it; it follows now, that I should put this

this Speculation into Practice; that I ſhould ſearch the Scriptures with all the diligence I can, and ſet my Mind, with all its Faculties, on work, to find out as much as I am able of the Will of God, that I may the better conform my ſelf unto it. This, with God's help, I deſign ſpeedily to do: And the Reſult of my Thoughts ſhall be publiſhed to the World, if what I here write prove acceptable. But, in the mean time, *I think it not improper here to add ſome general Conſiderations, which may ſerve as Rules and Guides to me, or to any other Perſon*, who ſhall ſet himſelf upon ſuch an Enquiry; *to direct our*

Judgments aright, to the true Doctrine of Chriſtianity, and to keep us from all Miſtakes about it.

XL. *Firſt*, Then, I take it for granted, That the Chriſtian Religion is calculated for Men of Reaſon and Underſtanding; that is, That it is fit to ſatisfie and convince every ſober Man, who ſeriouſly conſiders the Arguments on which it relies; and is not led aſtray by Paſſion, by Prejudice, or Worldly Intereſt. That this is ſo, appears very evidently from hence; Becauſe both Jeſus and his Apoſtles do appeal to the common Reaſon and Underſtandings of Men, to judge of what they taught.

Yea,

Yea, and why, even of your ſelves, judge ye not what is right? ſays Jeſus, *Luk.* 12. 57. *Prove all things, hold faſt that which is good,* ſays St. *Paul*, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 21. *Be ready always to give an Anſwer to every one that asketh you a Reaſon of the Hope that is in you,* ſays St. *Peter*, 1 *Pet.* 3. 15. *Believe not every Spirit; but try the Spirits, whether they are of God,* ſays St. *John*, 1 *Joh.* 4. 1. Hence then I conclude, That *there can be nothing in Chriſtian Religion, which contradicts the clear and evident Principles of Natural Reaſon.* For otherwiſe, a Rational Man could not be a Chriſtian. (See §. 33.)

XLI. *Secondly*, It appears plain to me, that Chriſtian Religion was calculated, not only, nor chiefly, for Men of great and deep Learning; But alſo for thoſe of ordinary, plain, and mean Capacities: That is to ſay, That there is nothing neceſſary in Chriſtianity, but what may be as well underſtood by every ordinary, illiterate Man, as by the greateſt Scholars. If this were not ſo, it would not be poſſible for an unlearned Man to be as good a Chriſtian as one that is learned: Whereas the contrary is moſt apparently declared in the *New Teſtament*. *I thank thee, O Father, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from*

from the Wiſe and Prudent, and haſt revealed them unto Babes, ſays Jeſus, *Matth.* 11. 25. To which, the Words of St. *Paul* do exactly agree, 1 *Cor.* 1. 19. to *Verſ.* 7. of the Second Chapter. And the ſame St. *Paul* gives us a Caution, That *Philoſophy* ſhould not corrupt our Chriſtianity, *Col.* 2. 8. And warns *Timothy* againſt *Science, falſely* ſo called, 2 *Tim.* 6. 20. But there is nothing ſo much as intimated throughout the whole *Bible*, that Philoſophy, or any other Humane Learning, will qualifie a Man ever the better, to become a Chriſtian. I confeſs, indeed, That, as things ſtand at this time in the World, it is

highly convenient that the Teachers and Preachers of Chriſtianity ſhould be competently skilled in Humane Learning; that they may be the better able to defend their Religion, and the Purity of it, againſt thoſe who uſe ſo much Art and Skill, either to corrupt, or oppoſe it. But where a Man ſets up, not for a Teacher, but only for a true Believer, it is evident, from what has been ſaid, that he has no need of Scholarſhip; but only of a plain and ſober Underſtanding, to make him capable of all neceſſary Inſtruction for a good Chriſtian. Or elſe, Why ſhould the Goſpel be preached ſo particularly

to

to the *Poor*, *Matth.* 11. 5. who are commonly illiterate? And how ſhould the *Poor of this World* become ſo *rich in Faith*, as St. *James* tells us? *Jam.* 2. 5. From whence I think I may conclude, That *all ſuch Doctrines, the Underſtanding and Proof whereof depend either on the ſubtile Speculations of Humane Philoſophy, or the Niceties and Criticiſms of Grammatical Learning, or the curious Knowledge of Hiſtory and Antiquity, are not to be eſteemed as neceſſary Parts of Chriſtianity.*

XLII. *Thirdly*, It is no leſs evident to me, that the main Deſign of Jeſus, and of his Diſciples, whom he ſent

to preach the Goſpel, was, to make Men, not wiſer as to Matters of Speculation; but better, and more vertuous, as to their Lives and Actions. *Knowledge puffeth up; but Charity edifieth,* ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 8. 1. Thus alſo, *Chap.* 13. of the ſame Epiſtle, he gives us to underſtand, that the Gift of *Tongues* and of *Prophecy*, the Underſtanding of all *Myſteries*, and all *Knowledge*, and *Faith*, are of no value before God, without *Charity*. And that by Charity, he means a Life led in the Practice of Vertue and Piety, ſufficiently appears by the Sequel of that Chapter. The ſame St. *Paul* tells us, *Tit.* 2: 13. That *the Grace*

Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men; (For what End? To make them more wiſe, more learned, or more lofty in their Speculations? No ſuch thing: But,) *teaching us, That, denying Ungodlineſs, and Worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and Godly in this preſent World.* And, to omit a multitude of Texts, which might be alledged in ſo plain a Matter; I ſhall only add what we are told, *Rom.* 2. 6, *&c.* That God *will render unto every Man according to his Deeds, &c.* Which is a plain Demonſtration, that it is our *Deeds*, that is, our Practices, our Lives and Converſations,

that we are chiefly obliged to take care of. I grant, indeed, that God may, if he pleaſes, command things that are purely Ceremonial, and ſuch as have no manner of Influence upon Vertue and Morality; As undoubtedly he did unto the Children of *Iſrael*: And if he does command any ſuch things, 'tis certain that we owe Obedience to them by virtue of that Authority which God has over us. He may alſo reveal ſuch Truths as are merely ſpeculative, and have nothing practical in them: And whoſoever is convinced of any ſuch Revelation, is undoubtedly bound to give his Aſſent to the things ſo revealed,

led, although they are beyond the Reach of his Understanding; (as I have said, §. 33.) But from what I have here said, I think I may conclude, That *since Vertue and Morality are undoubtedly the chief Design of Christianity, they ought to be chiefly regarded, and attended to by all Christians. Nor ought any thing which is purely Ceremonial, or Speculative, to be reckoned as a necessary Part of Christian Religion; except it appears very evidently, that God has revealed, or commanded it. Very evidently*, I say: For, when a thing is conceived in dark and doubtful Expressions, it is very liable to be mistaken; and he that

is

is guilty of ſuch a Miſtake, can very hardly be charged with a Fault.

XLIII. *Fourthly*, That the Knowledge of God Almighty, his Attributes, and his Law, may, in part, be gathered from the Light of Nature (antecedent to any Revelation) is evident from Reaſon, and acknowledged by St. *Paul*. *For the inviſible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made; even his Eternal Power and Godhead.* Rom. 1. 20. (*See* Pſal. 19. 1.) And *when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the things contained in the Law, theſe having*

having not the Law, are a Law unto themſelves; which ſhew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conſcience alſo bearing Witneſs, and their Thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another, Rom. 2. 14, 15. Now although all things relating to Religion, which may be known by the Light of Nature, are, I think, again repeated and farther explained by the Holy Scripture; Yet becauſe it may be that this will not appear ſo plainly to every one, I think it neceſſary here to Note, That *we are obliged to give our Aſſent to thoſe Truths, and our Obedience to thoſe Laws*

Laws of Religion which we are able to diſcover by our Natural Reaſon, although the ſame ſhould not appear to us to be again repeated in Scripture. For, for this very reaſon St. *Paul* pronounces the ancient Gentiles to be *without Excuſe, becauſe that when they knew God*, that is, had ſome Knowledge of him by their natural Underſtanding, *they glorified him not as God*, by owning and obeying him. *Rom.* 1. 20, 21, *&c.* And what is it elſe but an Appeal to the natural Notions of Mankind, when he exhorts us, That *whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things*

things are pure, whatſoever things are Lovely, whatſoever things are of good Report, if there be any Vertue, and if there be any Praiſe, we ſhould think on theſe things, Phil. 4. 8.

XLIV. *Fifthly*, He that writes a Treatiſe upon any Subject, whatſoever he has a Mind that his Reader ſhould particularly obſerve andbe convinced of,he will be ſure to lay it down plainly as a main Concluſion; nor will he fail (if he be diſcreet) as often as Occaſion requires, to repeat and referr to it, that the more Notice may be taken of his Meaning and Deſign. Such things as are mentioned onely occaſionally and collaterally,

terally, and not as any part of the main Subject of the Diſcourſe, are not always expreſſed with ſo much Care and Exactneſs, but that often even the meaning of them may be miſunderſtood. Nor can we be always certain what is the true Senſe and Opinion of a Writer, from ſuch accidental Expreſſions; (which ſometimes may be uſed figuratively, ſometimes by way of Alluſion or Accommodation, ſometimes with Reference to the Capacity of People, without any Regard to the litteral Truth of them) except he gives us ſome farther Explication of his Mind. From whence

whence I think I may conclude, That *the neceſſary Doctrines and Precepts of Chriſtian Religion, are not to be gathered from thoſe collateral and occaſional Expreſſions which are ſcattered up and down in the Scriptures; but from the main Scope and Deſign of the whole Bible in general, and of each Book of it in particular.*

XLV. I have thus briefly and plainly given, I hope, a rational Account of Religion; and of Chriſtianity in general. If I find that what I have here writ is likely to do any good in the World, I ſhall proceed, with God's Aſſiſtance, to draw out and publiſh

publiſh a particular Account of the Doctrines to be believed, and Duties to be practiſed, by a Chriſtian.

FINIS.

Pag. 65. lin. *ult.* r. cannot but.

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A

GENTLEMAN'S

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Part II. & III.

In which the Nature of the Christian Religion is particularly enquired into, and Explained.

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Printed for Richard Sare at *Greys-Inn-gate* in *Holborn*, 1697.

CYMBELINE.

PART II. ACT II.

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A Short PREFACE To the whole.

SOme Men slight Religion, whilst others corrupt and perplex it with things either false or unnecessary; the later of

which I look upon to be much the cauſe of the former.

Many will not take the pains to read much; and many do not throughly conſider, nor will digeſt what they read; which renders their Notions confuſed, and themſelves uncertain what to conclude.

I have therefore endeu-

endeavoured to make such a short and easy Draught of Christianity and the Grounds of it, as every Man of a moderate Capacity may read without Tediousness, and understand without Difficulty; And which, if it does not wholly satisfie him, may yet serve to put his Thoughts into

a Method, and himself upon seeking for farther Satisfaction.

The first Part of this small Work I put forth some time since; and, finding that it has not proved altogether unacceptable to Men of Judgment and Moderation, I have been encouraged to finish and publish the

Second and Third Parts also.

My Design is certainly good; and if I have not well performed what I have undertaken, I hope at least that what I have here done, may move some more able and Judicious Person to take the Work in hand, and supply those Defects of which I have been guilty.

My Design is certainly good; and if I have not well performed what I have undertaken, I hope at least that what I have here done, may move some more able and judicious Person to take the Work in hand, and supply those Defects of which I have been guilty.

THE CONTINUATION OF A *Gentleman's Religion.*

Being the Second PART.

1. THE *Holy Scriptures* being the only authentick Record that I am able to find of the Chriſtian Religion, I take it for granted that they *do expreſs Divine Matters really and truly as the things are in themſelves:* And therefore I can-

not but believe that all the Doctrin therein delivered is most certainly true, altho many times I am not able to understand the Design and Meaning of some Expressions and Passages which do occur therein. I think it indeed to be very proper, that Men of any reasonable Learning and Prudence should modestly offer their Thoughts to the World, in order to the explaining of such Places of the Scriptures as appear to be abstruse and difficult: *But he who speaks his own Words* (and not those of Scripture) *can therein only offer his own Apprehensions*; to which no Man can be obliged to subscribe, any farther than as he is in his own Reason convinced of

of the Truth of them, and their Conſonancy with the Scriptures.

2. I do not apprehend that an implicit Faith is due to the Church of *Rome* which challenges it (Part 1. §. 21.) much leſs ſure to any other Church which does not require it. *When*, therefore, *any Church, much more when any private Men, do offer me any Doctrin of Religion in their own Words, I think I ought to conſider*, Firſt, *Whether what they ſay is intelligible*: (For tho we may be obliged to believe ſuch things as are above our Underſtanding to comprehend, (Part 1. §. 33.) yet it is impoſſible for any Man to give an explicit Aſſent to any Form

of Words, if he does not know the meaning of them.) Secondly, *Whether it is agreeable to the ſelf-evident Principles of Reaſon*, for, If I apprehend it to be otherwiſe, it is impoſſible for me to believe it. (Part 1. §. 33.) Nor muſt any Text of Scripture be interpreted above the Level of plain and ſelf-evident Reaſon, whatever the literal Senſe may ſeem to be. *And*, Thirdly, *whether the Truth of it can be proved by any ſolid Argument*, either from Reaſon or Scripture: for tho a Doctrin be both intelligible and poſſible, yet ſtill it may be falſe; and therefore is not to be believed except it can be proved. Theſe Rules I have endeavoured

voured ſtrictly to obſerve in the Trial of thoſe Doctrins which I am now about to propoſe; and I deſire my Reader carefully to make uſe of the ſame, in the Examination of all that I ſhall offer unto him. But here I muſt deſire him to take notice, that I do ſuppoſe him to be well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and alſo with the common Arguments, upon which the ſeveral Parties of Chriſtians do ground and maintain their Opinions: And therefore, for his Eaſe, as well as my own, I ſhall ſave my ſelf the Labour of mentioning ſuch Arguments and Places of Scripture, as are uſually brought to prove thoſe Points which are gene-

rally acknowledged by all Chriſtians, and even in thoſe Points which are controverted between different Parties, I ſhall ordinarily think it enough to hint at ſome of thoſe Texts, and Arguments, which are uſed on either ſide; of which I can ſcarce ſuppoſe any Man to be ignorant that is but moderately acquainted with the Principles of Chriſtianity, and the ſeveral Parties that profeſs it.

3. *To believe what God makes known, and to do what he commands, is* what all Men call *Religion:* But things that are impoſſible, 'tis certain that God requires from no Man (Part 1. §. 14.) *When* therefore *Damnation is denounced*

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in Scripture *againſt thoſe who receive not the Goſpel, it muſt needs be underſtood only of them in whoſe Power it was to have received it*; and not of ſuch who are invincibly ignorant; either for want of Capacity, *John* 9. 41. or of the means of Knowledge, *Joh.* 15. 22. But for a Man who has both the Capacity and Means of Knowledge, through Negligence, to continue in Ignorance of God's Will, my Reaſon tells me is a very great Sin; beſides all thoſe Places of Scripture which do require us diligently to ſeek after Knowledge.

4. That *there is a God*, is ſufficiently to be proved from our own Reaſon and Obſerva-

tion: *But fully to comprehend his Nature*, or declare in all Points what he is, *is by all allowed to be impoſſible to us.*

5. That *God never had a Beginning*, I think I have ſufficiently concluded (Part 1. §. 6.) And, if the holy Scripture had not told me that he is from Everlaſting to Everlaſting; yet my own Reaſon would have inferred that *he is ſubject to no Decay, nor ever ſhall have an Ending.*

6. The Nature of every Material Being ſeems neceſſarily to imply a Poſſibility of having its Parts disjoyned and ſeparated one from another; and conſequently of being diſſolved and deſtroyed: And therefore I conclude, that the eter-

eternal *God does not consist of Matter*; and that Being which is intelligent, and does not consist of any material Parts, I call a Spirit: And this is what I mean when I say that *God is a Spirit*. As for those Expressions *the Eyes of the Lord*, the *Arm of the Lord*, and such like, which do occur sometimes in Scripture, and seem to imply Bodily Parts, it is manifestly obvious that they must be purely metaphorical.

7. Our Experience does sufficiently testifie that whatsoever is visible to us, is ever material. Since therefore *God* does not consist of Matter, I conclude that he *is invisible to Mortal Eyes*, as the Scripture

poſitively declares him to be: And all thoſe Texts which ſeem to ſay, that he has been ſeen by Man, I think muſt of neceſſity be interpreted ſome other way, *viz.* either, 1. Of an Angel appearing in a glorious and majeſtatick manner: Or 2. Of the eternal Son of God aſſuming a Bodily Appearance, as after he took our Nature upon him: Or, 3. Of ſome viſible and extraordinary Signs and Tokens that the inviſible God was there preſent in an extraordinary Manner: Or, 4. Of thoſe myſtical and Hieroglyphical Repreſentations which God has ſometimes been pleaſed to make of himſelf, not to the Senſes, but to the Imagination and Underſtanding

ſtanding of his Prophets, in their extatick Dreams and Viſions.

8. Amongſt all thoſe things which I can conceive poſſible to be done, *i. e.* to imply no Contradiction, I can find nothing which to me appears more difficult, than what God has already done in the Structure of the Univerſe: And therefore I conclude, that *God* can do whatſoever in its ſelf is poſſible to be done, which is what I mean when I ſay, that *he is Almighty*: Nor is there any one, ſure, who will venture to ſay, that God can do ſuch things as imply a Contradiction, either in themſelves, or to his own Nature and Attributes.

9. That

9. That God, who made all things, ſhould be ignorant of any thing, appears to me moſt abſurd to imagine. But when I ſay, that *God is Omniſcient*; If there is any thing, the Knowledge of which would manifeſtly imply a Contradiction, it could ſurely be no greater Irreverence to ſay, that God could not know, than that he could not do ſuch a thing. But whether the Knowledge of a future Contingent would imply a Contradiction or not, is a very abſtruſe and metaphyſical Diſpute; and except the contrary can very clearly be made appear, I know not how to imagine that God is, or can be ignorant of any thing paſt,

paſt, preſent, or to come, however contingent.

10. If God were or could be confined to, or circumſcribed in any determinate Space or Place, it would be hard to conceive that his Knowledge and Power ſhould be infinite; and extend to all Places. But I cannot ſuppoſe God to be preſent in all Places after the ſame manner, as the Air is every where preſent throughout its Region, or the Light throughout its Hemiſphere, for that would imply local Extenſion; and conſequently, that he were a material Being, contrary to what I have ſaid, §. 6. But that God can in an inſtant exert his Power in any, or all Places, whenever he pleaſes,

ſes, (as the Soul can on a ſudden move the extreameſt Joynt of the Body) is, I think, an evident Conſequence of his Omnipotence; and that manner of Exiſtence whereby he is able to do this, I call Omnipreſence; and this is all that I am able to conceive when I ſay that *God is every where preſent.*

11. That *God is moſt wiſe*, that is to ſay, moſt perfectly knows what is always fitteſt and beſt to be done, and which is the propereſt way to bring what he pleaſes to paſs, is an evident Conſequence from his Omniſcience, or rather indeed a Branch of it.

12. From God's Wiſdom it neceſſarily follows, that his

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Counſel is unchangeable. For he who alters or repents of any thing, which he has once poſitively determined, plainly ſhews his Foreſight to be imperfect, and his Wiſdom defective. When therefore we meet with ſome Paſſages in Scripture which ſeem to ſuggeſt that God has decreed one thing, and yet afterwards done another; we muſt of neceſſity underſtand ſuch Decrees to have been not abſolute, but merely conditional (a Condition being in many Caſes implied, and ſuppoſed, where it is not in Words expreſſed.) And when he is ſaid to have repented of ſome things which he has done, or to have been grieved thereat, we muſt needs

needs interpret ſuch Places in a metaphorical Senſe, with an Alluſion to thoſe Motions and Paſſions in Mankind; juſt as *Hands*, *Arms*, *Eyes*, *&c.* are on the ſame account ſometimes aſcribed unto him, tho really he has no ſuch Members, no more than he has the Paſſions, which belong to Men.

13. I do moſt evidently find in my ſelf a Power to chooſe at all times what I pleaſe, and to determine my own Actions as I will my ſelf: And this I look upon to be a greater Perfection in me, than if I were abſolutely neceſſitated and determined by ſomewhat without my ſelf, in every thing which I ſhould do.

Since

Since therefore I derive this Perfection originally from God, who is the Contriver and Author of my Being, (Part 1. §. 7.) I cannot but aſcribe the ſame in the higheſt Degree to him, who muſt be the Fountain of all Perfection. And therefore I moſt readily believe that *God is a free Agent*; and worketh all things after the Counſel of his own Will.

14. How Juſtice, in a ſtrict Senſe, is to be aſcribed unto God, who ows nothing to any one, and has a ſupreme and moſt abſolute Dominion over all things, as having made them purely at the Motion of his own Will, I look upon to be a nice and uſeleſs

Diſ-

Diſquiſition: But the common Rules of Juſtice, which Men are obliged to obſerve one to another, to me do appear to be ſo very reaſonable, that I cannot apprehend why any one, of Knowledge and Underſtanding, ſhould ever vary from them, except thereby he might propoſe either to advance his Intereſt, compaſs his Pleaſure, or wreck his Malice; neither of which I can imagine to have any Place in God. I therefore conclude that *God is Juſt*, even according to the common Rules of Juſtice and Equity, as far as they can be applied to him.

15. Veracity to me appears to be no leſs agreeable to Reaſon

ſon than Juſtice, if it be not rather a Part of it: And ſince I am able to imagin no Shadow of a Reaſon why God ſhould declare any thing which were falſe; I cannot but believe that *he is moſt true* in all that he ſays.

16. That God ſhould hate thoſe Creatures which he has made (except they by their evil Actions and Diſobedience do deſerve it) is not to be conceived: And as he who loves another is always ready to pardon his Faults (eſpecially if they have any way proceeded only from Frailty and Infirmity) upon his true and ſincere Repentance; ſo if the Perſon beloved continues obſtinate and incorrigible in his Tranſ-

Tranſgreſſions, he, with all the Reaſon that can be, forfeits that Love which he once enjoyed, and juſtly incurs ſuch Penalty as may be ſuitable unto the Obligations which he has broken, and the Quality of the Perſon he has offended. I therefore conclude, That *God has originally a Love for all Mankind*, and that he *will be always merciful unto ſuch Sinners as are truly penitent*; *but ſtrict and ſevere in the Puniſhment of thoſe who go on in the Breach of his Laws without Repentance.*

17. *Nor are thoſe Calamities which ſo often follow us in this Life, or God's viſiting the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children* (which can be underſtood only

ly of temporal Afflictions) *or his punishing the wicked with extreme and everlasting Misery, any manner of Derogation, either to his Justice, or his Love and Mercy towards Mankind,* since temporal Afflictions may well be looked on as the Effects of his Love, as being designed to wean and purge us from the Love and Filth of this World, and to make us more fit for Heaven; and Eternal Damnation (of which we have fair warning given us, and may therefore avoid it if we please) is as little as can be threatened (and often is but too little) to keep us back from all manner of Sin and Wickedness.

18. That

18. That ſome ſort of Actions are eternally and eſſentially good, that is to ſay, to be approved of by every impartial rational Being (*e. g.* to love him from whom we derive our Exiſtence, to perform our Promiſe, and ſuch like) and that the contrary Actions hereunto are therefore eſſentially and eternally evil, is to me from hence ſufficiently evinced, becauſe that if all Beings, which are endowed with Reaſon and Underſtanding, ſhould univerſally ſet themſelves to do thoſe things which now are accounted evil, and to omit thoſe things which now are eſteemed good; the Conſequence of this muſt neceſſarily be univerſal

verſal Confuſion and Miſery. Now that God loves and approves of all Actions that are good, does evidently appear, becauſe ſuch Actions do tend to the general Happineſs of his Creatures, whom he loves, *q.* 16. and for the contrary Reaſon it will follow, that he hates and abhors all Actions that are evil. And this is what I mean when I ſay, That *God is moſt holy.*

19. All poſſible Excellency or Perfection that I can conceive, is reducible unto theſe Five Heads, *viz.* 1. Perfection of Being, which conſiſts in perpetual Duration, without any Decay or Infirmity. 2. Perfection of Underſtanding, which conſiſts in ſuch Know-

Knowledg and Wiſdom as is free from all Miſtake or Ignorance. 3. Perfection of the Will, which conſiſts in a free Liberty to chooſe or refuſe, without any Conſtraint or fatal Neceſſity. 4. Perfection of Power, which conſiſts in an Ability to do every thing. And 5. Moral Perfection, which conſiſts in an inflexible Reſolution always to do and encourage that which is morally good, and to avoid and diſcourage whatſoever is morally evil. Now, ſince all theſe Perfections are in God in the moſt abſolute manner; as I think I have ſhewn in the foregoing Paragraphs, from hence it will follow, That *God is moſt abſolutely perfect.*

20. And

20. And ſince he who is abſolutely perfect can ſtand in need of nothing; it muſt alſo follow, that *God is moſt perfectly happy in Himſelf.*

21. As my Reaſon do's evidently demonſtrate unto me the Being of a God, ſo does it not in the leaſt ſuggeſt to me any Argument to conclude that *there is* any more *but One God*: And it is abſurd and unreaſonable to multiply Beings without any Ground or Reaſon for it.

22. That there is a real, and not only a nominal Diſtinction, between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt or Spirit; that they are frequently ſpoken of in the Holy Scriptures in ſuch Terms as

we ordinarily uſe when we ſpeak of Three Perſons (altho ſometimes this Expreſſion, Holy Ghoſt or Holy Spirit, may be put to ſignifie not ſo much the Perſon, as the Power, Effect or Energy of God's Spirit) That, altho the Son be often ſpoken of as really and truly a Man, yet many things are ſaid of him which cannot agree to a meer Man, or to any created Being whatſoever;and that there are ſuch things alſo ſpoken of the Holy Ghoſt, as cannot be accommodated unto a Creature: Moreover, that the Son derives his Being from, and always depends upon the Father, as the Holy Ghoſt does from, and upon the Father and

and the Son: All these things, I say, in my Opinion, are not to be denyed by any one, who will but interpret the Holy Scriptures according to the ordinary Sense and Signification of the Words thereof, and not according to his own Prejudices or preconceived Opinions. And altho the *Socinians* do clearly enough expound some of those Texts of Scripture, which, with more Zeal than Reason, are sometimes urged against them; yet, as to the principal Passages, which are alleged to prove what I have now asserted, I think their Interpretation of them not only to be harsh and strained (which in a manner is acknowledged even by their

own acute and brief Hiſtorian, in the laſt Paragraph of his ſecond Letter) but alſo, many times, to be utterly irreconcileable unto the Words and Context. And now (to explain thoſe Conceptions which ariſe in my Mind upon the Conſideration of the Texts here hinted at, as well as, in a Matter ſo abſtruſe and remote from my Senſes, I am able) ſince I cannot find a more proper Term to expreſs the Diſtinction of *the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt* by, *I call* them *Three Perſons*; *and*, not knowing what other Title to give a Divine Perſon who is no Creature, *I call each Perſon God: But I give the Title of God in a more emphatical manner unto*

the

the Father than unto the Son or Holy Ghoſt, becauſe the Father depends on none, but they do depend on him: *And*, ſince both my Reaſon and the Holy Scriptures do teach me to own no more than one God, I am of neceſſity compelled to ſay that *theſe Three are ſo united together* (tho in ſuch a manner as is above my Underſtanding) *as to be but one God.* And altho it argues a great deal of Imperfection in Humane Speech, that, for want of other fit and proper Terms, we are forced to give the ſame Appellation to each Perſon ſingly, and to the Three conjointly; yet this does not imply any manner of Contradiction, as ſome do object;

becauſe, when we apply the Word *God* to one ſingle Perſon, it has not the ſame *exact* and *adequate* Signification, as when we aſcribe it unto the Three Perſons conjointly (for that would imply that each ſingle Perſon were, at the ſame time, the Three Perſons; and ſo confound that Diſtinction which the Holy Scriptures do ſo often and apparently make between them:) And this analogical Difference, in the Signification of the Word *God*, will eaſily ſolve moſt of thoſe Objections which the *Socinians* do bring againſt the Doctrin of the Trinity. And becauſe I know no better Word to expreſs that Unity which I apprehend to be

be between the *Three Perſons*; I therefore ſay, that they *are One in Eſſence* or Subſtance. For Unity of Concord or Conſent alone, does not ſeem enough to me to denominate them to be One God. And becauſe I find that *the Son is ſaid to be begotten, and the Holy Ghoſt to proceed*, or be ſent, or emitted; I therefore make uſe of theſe Terms, without pretending to aſſign the Difference between Generation and Proceſſion: And altho *the Son and the Holy Ghoſt*, being each of them God, *are*, and muſt needs be, *of the ſame Nature, and*, upon that account, *equal with the Father*; yet it is manifeſt that this Equality muſt be underſtood

with an Allowance for the abſolute Independence of the Father, and the Dependence of the Son and Holy Ghoſt upon him.

23. All the Objections that I can remember to be made againſt the Doctrin of the Trinity thus ſtated, I think, are eaſie enough to be ſolved by what I have now ſaid, excepting Two, which muſt be particularly anſwered. The firſt is taken from *Joh.* 10. 33. &c. But tho our Saviour did not here aſſert his Divinity when there ſeemed to be occaſion for it, yet it will not follow, that therefore he is not God: Eſpecially if we conſider, that it was not always his Cuſtom to give full and com-

compleat Anſwers unto ſuch captious Queſtions and Objections as were put to him: But ſometimes he contented himſelf only with ſhewing the Unreaſonableneſs of thoſe who propoſed them; of which we have one Inſtance, *Mat.* 21. 23. &c. and another *Joh.* 8. 3. &c. and, as ſome think, another, *Mat.* 22. 17. &c. And we may as well conclude, that he had no Authority for what he did, becauſe he did not declare it when the Chief Prieſts and Elders queſtioned it, *Mat.* 21. 23. as deny his Divinity, becauſe he did not expreſly maintain it, when on that account he was charged with Blaſphemy. The other Ob-

jection is drawn from *Mar.* 13. 32. But to it I anſwer, That our Saviour's Deſign, in that Place, being only to repreſent the Day there ſpoken of as a Secret not to be made known unto Men until it ſhould come upon them; that they might always ſtand upon their Guard, watch, and prepare for it: Let but the Word *know* be taken to ſignifie to *make known* (which fully anſwers the Deſign of the Place, and, as it is evident, St. *Paul* uſes the ſame Word, 1 *Cor.* 2. 2. *I determined*, ſays he, *not to know*, that is, not to make known or teach, *any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified*: and then the moſt natural Paraphraſe

of

of that Place will be this, *But that Day and Hour there is no one who ſhall or can make known unto you; no not the Angels which are in Heaven*; (who may be ſuppoſed to be ignorant of it themſelves) *nor even the Son himſelf* (who altho he *knoweth all things*, Joh. 21. 17. yet *can do nothing of himſelf, but what he ſeeth the Father do*, Joh. 5. 19. And *who ſpeaketh not of himſelf, but the Father which ſent him gave him Commandment what he ſhould ſay*, Joh. 12. 49.) *But the Father only ſhall in his own time, make it known by bringing it to paſs.* And this Expoſition of this Place of Scripture (which is the *only* Text that ſeems to preſs very hard upon us in this Controverſy)

verſy) I am ſure, is much more eaſie and natural, than *many* of thoſe Interpretations, which the *Socinians* do advance, of the principal Paſſages which we urge againſt them. But if any one ſhall tell me, that this whole Matter concerning the Trinity, is very obſcure and difficult to be apprehended; and therefore, that it is unreaſonable to require the explicit Belief of ſuch Doctrin, as neceſſary, either to Salvation or Church-communion: As to the Obſcurity, it is not to be expected that it ſhould be otherwiſe, ſince, in this Life, *we know* but *in part*, *and propheſie in part*, and *ſee* but *through a Glaſs darkly*, or *in a Riddle*, as the

the Margin has it Word for Word from the Original, 1 *Cor.* 13. 9, 12. As to Church-communion, I ſhall ſpeak of it hereafter in its proper Place: And as touching Salvation, I refer my Reader to what I have ſaid, §. 3. and Part 1. §. 14. and §. 26.

24. Either the Matter of this viſible World did from all Eternity coexiſt together with God, or elſe it was produced from Nothing by him, there being no Third Way to be aſſigned: Now both theſe Ways being above, tho neither of them contrary to my Reaſon; my Reaſon alone can never ſolidly determine which of them is the right. But the later of theſe making moſt,

moſt, in my Opinion, for the Honour of God (of whom, as being the moſt perfect Being, I think I ought to entertain the moſt glorious Thoughts that poſſibly I can;) and the Holy Scriptures ſo often aſcribing Eternity without Beginning unto God, in an emphatical manner, as his alone peculiar Attribute, I am thereby brought to believe, that *the Matter of this World* is not eternal, but *was at firſt created by God from Nothing*; *and* conſequently, that *God can again annihilate it, or any Part of it*, if it ſhould ſo pleaſe him.

25. That *God did contrive, frame and faſhion this World*, and every part of it, *and* alſo that *he ſtill preſerves and governs*

verns it by his Providence, I have formerly concluded, Part 1. § 7. and §. 10. And tho every ignorant Perſon is not able to dive into, and fathom the Counſels of a great and Sovereign Prince; yet this is no Argument that he does not manage and rule his Dominions with due Care and Wiſdom: Nor could the making, nor can the Government of the World be any manner of Trouble to God (as the *Epicureans* objected) ſince he is abſolutely Omnipotent, and needs no more but to ſpeak the Word and the thing is done.

26. It is very evident that the Heathen World its ſelf was generally and ſtrongly addicted

dicted to the Belief of certain Beings (ſome good and ſome evil) ſuperiour in Nature to Man, but ſubject to, and Miniſters of the Will and Pleaſure of the ſupreme God. But the Holy Scriptures do give us a more full and perfect Account of this Matter, *viz.* that *God created certain Spiritual Beings, called Angels*; that is to ſay, Meſſengers, as being ſent forth by him to execute his Will upon all Occaſions that he thinks fit; and particularly to miniſter for them who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation (not that God has any need of their Aſſiſtance or Miniſtry, any more than he has of the Worſhip and Service of Man; but only thought fit to cre-

create them of his own good Will and Pleaſure; and probably that they, as well as Man, might be Objects for him to exerciſe his Goodneſs and Beneficence upon.) But whether every particular Perſon, State and Kingdom have their proper Guardian Angels, appointed them by God, is not, as I can find, upon any ſure Grounds to be determined. *But* we are farther informed, that *of theſe Angels ſome ſinned, and therefore kept not their firſt Eſtate*, but were caſt down into Hell, and delivered into Chains of Darkneſs, to be reſerved unto Judgment; *the Chief*, or Prince *of whom is called the Devil*, the great Dragon, the old Serpent and Satan,

tan, *and is*, together with his Angels, *permitted by God to range to and fro in the Earth, to tempt even the Godly, but to prevail and work in the Children of Diſobedience.*

27. That an eternal Succeſſion of Men, or any other Beings, without a Beginning, is abſolutely impoſſible, I have, I think with Reaſon, already ſaid, Part 1. §. 6. That Man at firſt was not faſhioned by any blind and undeſigned Chance, is to me very evident, as well from the wonderful Frame of his Mind, as from the great Variety, Regularity and Uſefulneſs of all the Parts of his Body, and particularly his Organs of Senſation; And that he

he did not at first spring up out of the Earth by any Force of Nature, distinct from the Power of God, I think needs no Proof, because the contrary Supposition is not only without any Ground of Evidence, but also liable to so many monstrous Improbabilities as do render it highly extravagant to imagine. I therefore must conclude, That (at the least) *the first Male and Female of Mankind were immediately framed and fashioned by* God: *and* that *all the rest of them were and are derived from those two by the way of natural Generation* (Christ Jesus excepted, who tho born of a Woman, was not begotten of a Man) is the plain Voice of the Holy Scripture.

28. That

28. That Man, tho made a little lower than the Angls, is yet by Nature far more excellent than any other living Creature, is ſufficiently apparent. The Holy Scripture tells us, that God made Man after his own Image: But this Expreſſion cannot be underſtood with reſpect to the Shape and Structure of the Human Body (God being both incorporeal and inviſible) but is, as I apprehend it, to be interpreted altogether with relation to thoſe Faculties which are implanted in the Mind of Man, and that internal Uprightneſs in which he was at firſt created; which do carry in them an evident Similitude and Analogy unto ſome of

thoſe Attributes and Perfections which are in God himſelf. That *the Body of Man is made originally of the Earth*, by which it is nouriſhed, and into which it is again reſolved, is obvious to be collected from Reaſon: *And* if I had never been told that *God breathed into his Noſtrils the Breath of Life, whereby he became a Living Soul*, yet thoſe Powers and Faculties which I find in my ſelf, of Thinking, Judging, Drawing Conſequences (and thoſe ſometimes in a very long Train) reflecting back upon my own Thoughts, and determining my own Actions as I pleaſe, together with that inward Satisfaction which I reap from doing what is morally

rally good, tho naturally and to my Body painful and uneaſy; and the Trouble which I find upon the doing of any thing which is morally evil, tho otherwiſe never ſo pleaſant and delightful, would, I think, have ſufficiently taught and aſſured me, that there is a Principle within me, which, tho united to my Body (and thereby affected with its Delights or Pains) yet is really diſtinct from it, and of a different Nature and more noble Original, which I call my Soul.

29. That God, who has originally a Love for all Mankind, §. 16, ſhould have created any Man with an Intent to make him eternally and una-

unavoidably miſerable, is to me a Contradiction: And ſince, on the contrary, he has naturally implanted in every Man a vehement and unextinguiſhable Deſire of being Happy, and of always remaining ſo, I cannot but conclude, that *God intended Man at his firſt Creation unto eternal Happineſs.* For that he ſhould implant the Seed and Principle of ſuch a Deſire in us all, which never fails to ſpring forth and ſhew its ſelf in every Man who comes to Years of Knowledge; and this to be only a Torment to us, without any Poſſibility either of ſuppreſſing or ſatisfying it; is, I think, not to be conceived, except we ſhould ſuppoſe that

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at the firſt he made us to be Objects, not of his Love, but Hatred.

30. As even by the Ruins of a noble Structure we may be able to give a Gueſs how goodly the Building was at its firſt Erection; ſo when I at preſent conſider how diſtorted the Nature of Man is (his Luſts and Paſſions always ſtrugling with, and often getting the Victory over his Reaſon, which evidently was deſigned for the ſuperiour Faculty) own my Underſtanding alone methinks ſuggeſts to me, that *Man was at firſt created in a more perfect and upright State and Condition than what he is in at preſent: But* how *our Nature was* ſo far *perverted*, as that

that all our Reaſon and Endeavours cannot again reduce it to that firm and perfect Regularity, in which we are ſenſible it ought to be, and therefore have cauſe to believe that it was at firſt framed by God, is what of our ſelves we never could have collected from any Suggeſtions of our own Underſtanding.

31. Whether the ſecond and third Chapters of the Book of *Geneſis* are all to be underſtood literally, or whether an allegorical Interpretation is in ſome parts to be admitted, I think my ſelf not much concerned to debate. But, which way ſoever we take, the plain Reſult will be, that whereas God placed our

firſt Parents, at their Creation, in a ſtate both of Innocency and Happineſs; they by tranſgreſſing his Law, and thereby incurring his Diſpleaſure, fell both from the one and the other. Now that they, by their ſin, might deprave their own Natures, and vitiate their Conſtitutions, is no way irrational to ſuppoſe: And that from the depraved Nature and vitiated Conſtitution of Parents divers inconveniences may be entailed upon their Poſterity (who do derive not only their bodily Temper and Complection, but frequently alſo their Paſſions and Inclinations from thoſe of their Parents) is what common Experience does dai-

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ly teſtifie. When therefore *the Holy Scripture aſſigns the ſin of our firſt Parents, as the Cauſe of the Corruption of the Nature of Mankind,* I ſee nothing therein which is not very reaſonably to be allowed.

32. He who grants a Favour to another, barely and only of his own free will and pleaſure, may without any violation of Juſtice, whenever he pleaſes, withdraw that, which he is under no Obligation to continue any longer than he thinks fit. Nor is it any way to be reckoned as unmerciful or cruel, to ceaſe the continuance of a purely voluntary kindneſs, if the ſtopping of it does not render the Perſon actually miſerable with-

out any fault committed by him. If therefore God had thought fit, even for no other reaſon but his own Pleaſure, to divert the ſtream of his kindneſs from Man; and that altho he had continued in a State of Innocency, provided he had not put him into a ſtate of unavoidable Miſery; who could have any juſt reaſon to complain, or find fault with him for doing what he ſhould pleaſe with his own? Much more then will it follow that, If upon the occaſon of our firſt Parents Tranſgreſſion, and the Corruption of our Nature which thereupon enſued, God had reſolved to cut us all forever off from the inheritance of thoſe Bleſſings to which Man

Man was designed at his first creation, but now rendred naturally unfit for, by this original pollution; even in this there had been nothing contrary to the strict Rules of Justice or Mercy: Especially if we consider, that all the World have ever thought it reasonable that, in some cases, Children should, on account of their Parents Faults, lose some benefits and advantages which otherwise they would have enjoyed. But actually to inflict a positive Punishment upon any one for a Fault which he never committed, nor any way voluntarily concurred to, nor was at all capable of hindering in him who committed it, being so directly contrary,

not only unto Mercy, but alſo to the common Rules of Juſtice; I can not but conclude, that *tho' the original Corruption of our Nature may be reckoned as a juſt occaſion why God might*, if he had pleaſed, *have excluded us all for ever from the Joys of Heaven; Yet that alone is not to be aſſigned as a Cauſe why he will doom any Man to the Torments of Hell*, who does not otherwiſe deſerve it, by his own actual ſins and Tranſgreſſions.

33. That by the Corruption of our Nature we are all of us mightily inclined to things that are evil and immoral, is moſt evident from our conſtant Experience: But that we have not thereby loſt all knowledge

knowledge and power of doing that which is good, I think is no leſs apparent from the Writings and Examples of ſo many brave Heathens; Who having no other Divine Law but that which was written in their Hearts by the Suggeſtions of their natural Underſtanding, yet both taught and did ſo many of the things contained in the written Law of God. But curiouſly to diſtinguiſh and aſſign the Bounds between Nature and Grace (which are both the Gifts of God; the one in an ordinary, the other in an extraordinary way) and to pretend to ſhew how far we may go by the bare ſtrength of Nature, and where it is that we juſt ſtand

in need of ſupernatural Aſſiſtance, I look upon to be a work of very little uſe or benefit; but of extraordinary difficulty, and perhaps impoſſible for any, but God himſelf, to perform. Moreover, how God will deal with thoſe who have no other Guide to follow but the Light of Nature; How far he will puniſh their Sins, be merciful to their Ignorance or Infirmities, or reward their endeavours to do good, is a Secret of which we are no way able to give any particular account. But it may ſuffice us to know, that the Generation of *Mankind by reaſon of the Corruption of their Nature being apparently in a worſe condition in reſpect of eternal*

nal Salvation, than what they otherwiſe would have been; God was pleaſed to determine that he *would not deal with them according to that abſolute Sovereignty which he had over them, nor according to the ſtrict and rigorous Rules of Juſtice*, which might have juſtified the greateſt Severities; *but according to the inclinations of his Mercy and Loving kindneſs*. Of which way of Gods proceeding with us, I come now to give an account.

34. That God might, if he had pleaſed, without the violation of any of his Attributes, have freely forgiven all the Sins of Mankind, and even reſtored our Nature again to its primitive Integrity and Up-

rightneſs, ſeems naturally to follow both from the Abſoluteneſs of his Authority, and the Almightineſs of his Power: And even the ſtricteſt Juſtice, tho it fully allows, yet does not compel any one to exact a Debt where he is the only Creditour, or a Puniſhment where he is the only party injured or offended. But if *God has thought fit* to deal after another manner with us; and *rather* offers *to help our Infirmities, as occaſion requires, than wholly to repair our perverted Nature; and chooſes to have an Expiation made for our Sins, rather than to remit them without any ſuch conſideration*; Altho his Will and Pleaſure is enough to ſilence all our Exceptions,

tions, and juſtifie his proceedings; yet may there ſome probable Conſiderations be urged in order to make us clearly apprehend the Wiſdom of God in the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of this his Diſpenſation: As namely, that hereby we are, or ought to be made more continually ſenſible of our conſtant Dependence upon him, of his great Mercy and Compaſſion for us, of his perfect Hatred and Abhorrence of ſin.

35. It cannot, I think, be doubted but that, at the very time of the Fall of man, God, who is infinitly wiſe and knowing, and therefore ſtands in need of no time to deliberate, had fully determined what he would

would do in order to the Expiation of our Sins, and the helping of our corrupted Nature, ſo as that we might be again in ſome capacity of recovering that Happineſs to which we were at firſt deſigned, *p.* 29. And that this work of *our Redemption was to be performed by the Means and Mediation of* an extraordinary Perſon, who was to be ſent into the World, under the Title of the Meſſiah, or the *Chriſt*, is abundantly evident, both from the Old and New Teſtament; eſpecially if we compare them and expound them one by another. But it is certain, that Chriſt did not immediately come into the World; nor was there any one for ſome Thouſands of Years

Years after the Fall, who ſo much as pretended to that Title or Office; Whether it were, that God thought it fit by ſome previous Diſpenſations to prepare the Minds of Men for the reception of ſo extraordinary a Perſon, or for what other reaſon, I pretend not to determine; but think my ſelf obliged intirely to ſubmit to the Wiſdom of God, who thought fit ſo to order it, that the Meſſiah ſhould not appear until that fulneſs of time which he had appointed for it. In the mean while, altho the great Light was not yet to come into the World, yet God ſuffered it not to be wholly overſpread with Darkneſs; But beſides the Light of the viſible

viſible Creation, which declares the Glory and eternal Power of God; and beſides the natural Light which ariſes in every Mans Underſtanding, whereby they who have no other Law, are a Law unto themſelves, unto which their own Conſcience is a Witneſs beyond exception; God was pleaſed in a ſupernatural way to reveal himſelf unto divers perſons (to the intent that they might teach the Knowledge of him to others) as to *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Melchizedek*, *Job*, and probably to many more than we read of (Amongſt whom, why *Baalam* ſhould not be reckoned, I can ſee no reaſon; altho Covetouſneſs and the hopes of worldly Advancement

vancement tempted him to make but an ill uſe of the good Gifts of God) And alſo to chuſe out unto himſelf a peculiar People, namely that of *Iſrael*, and to vouchſafe unto them a more than ordinary knowledge of Himſelf and his Laws, by his Servants *Moſes* and the Prophets: And laſtly by his Providence to order the matter ſo, that the Writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets ſhould many years before Chriſts coming, be tranſlated into the Greek tongue (which was then the moſt univerſal Language) that by them all Nations might have the more Inſtruction, and ſo be the better prepared to receive the Meſſiah, whenever he ſhould be

be made known unto them. And for this reaſon alſo it ſeems to be, that God ſo long before the Moſaick Law, ordained and appointed the Sacrificing of Beaſts; whereby it became the common practice of the Gentiles, as well as Jews: Not that he had any eſteem or value for the Blood of Bulls or of Goats; but only that by this practice the Minds of Men might be the more eaſily and readily diſpoſed to own and rely upon that great Sacrifice, which Chriſt was one day to make of Himſelf for them.

36. There are ſeveral Prophecies diſperſed up and down through the Old Teſtament, plainly deſigned to foretel the coming

coming of the Chriſt or Meſſiah, what ſort of perſon he ſhould be, and what he ſhould do and ſuffer: As that he ſhould be the Seed of the Woman, of the Progeny of *Abraham*, of the Family and Lineage of *David*, born in *Bethlehem*, and born of a Virgin: That he ſhould come into the World about the time that the Scepter and the Law-giver, that is to ſay, the force and power of civil Authority, ſhould ceaſe from the Tribe of *Judah*, and ſhould finiſh his Work in the compaſs of the laſt ſeven Years of thoſe Four hundred and ninety, which are pointed out by the Prophet *Daniel*; That by many he ſhould be deſpiſed and rejected

ed, ſhould be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs, be oppreſſed and afflicted, yet bear it moſt patiently, and at laſt be wounded and cut off, not for himſelf, but for our Tranſgreſſions. And yet for all this he is foretold to be a perſon wonderful, a Counſellour, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, of the increaſe of whoſe Government there ſhould be no end, and unto whom the gathering of the Nations ſhould be. Now altho there may ſome Difficulties be ſtarted as to the Interpretation of ſome of thoſe and ſuch like Prophecies, which do occurr in the Old Teſtament (which is no great wonder, conſidering how

how the Jews, who are enemies to Christianity, have endeavoured to obscure and perplex them) yet if we do consider that there is evidently a fair, consonant and reasonable Application of all these Predictions to be made unto Jesus of *Nazareth*, and that there is not, nor ever was any other person to whom they could be applied, besides himself; and since it is not possible for any one, but God, to foretell a thing with so many circumstances so long before it comes to pass, I think I may very well from hence conclude, not only against the Jews, who acknowledge, but also against all others, who may perhaps at first deny the Authority of the

the Old Teſtament, that *Jeſus* of *Nazareth is the Chriſt* or Meſſiah, whom God had promiſed to ſend into the World: And if to this we add the greatneſs of his Miracles, and the tranſcendent Goodneſs of his Doctrine (of which ſee Part 1. §. 19) I think the Argument will have the force of a Demonſtration.

37. In the Holy Scriptures I find ſuch things ſpoken of Chriſt as do plainly ſhew him to have been a true and real Man; in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted: Other Expreſſions alſo I find frequently applyed to him, which cannot poſſibly agree to any Man, or created Being whatſoever, but only unto God;

God; as I have already ſaid §. 22. And altho there is a plain Diſtinction made between his Divine and Humane Nature, yet is he always ſpoken of but as one perſon. Here then I know not better how to expreſs my Sentiments than by ſaying, that in the one and ſingle Perſon of Chriſt, there is a Conjunction of both the Divine and Humane Nature, and conſequently that *Chriſt is* really and truly *both God and Man.* And if the ſame Objection be made againſt this Doctrine as is againſt that of the Trinity, *viz.* that it is very obſcure and difficult to be apprehended; I ſhall alſo return the ſame Anſwer, as I have already done

done to that in the latter end of §. 23. to which I refer my Reader.

38. He who acknowledges Christ to be God, to be sure will allow of his eternal Existence, as to his Divine Nature; And, as to what concerns his Humane Nature; that *he was Conceived by* the Power of *the Holy Ghost*, *Born of the Virgin Mary*; and that, after some years spent in preaching and doing good, he was, thro the Malice of the Jews, and at their vehement desire, condemned by *Pilate* the Roman Governour, to be *crucified*; which was accordingly done, and a Spear thrust into his Side; That being *dead* he was *buried*, and lay in the Sepulcher unto the

the *third day*; upon which *he roſe from the dead, and* after ſeveral times converſing with his Diſciples for the ſpace of Forty days, that he *was* viſibly taken up from them, and *received into Heaven* unto infinite and eternal Glory, *where he is our perpetual Mediatour and Interceſſour at the Throne of God*: All this, I ſay, is ſo evidently and without Controverſy teſtified by his Diſciples (whoſe Veracity I have aſſerted, Part 1. §. 19) and recorded in the Scriptures of the New Teſtament (whoſe Authority I have proved Part 1. §. 23. &c,) that no reaſonable Man, I think, can now deny, or ſo much as doubt of any part of it: And altho there are one or two paſſages

paſſages of Scripture, from whence it is inferred, that *Chriſt* before his Reſurrection *did deſcend into Hell*, yet will I not venture, nor do I think it neceſſary, to determine whether by the word *Hell* is meant the ſtate of the dead only, or the place of the damned; or (if the latter ſignification be to be choſen) for what end and purpoſe it was that he deſcended thither. Only I conclude certainly, that it was not to ſuffer any thing there; becauſe I do not find the leaſt intimation throughout the Scripture of any ſuffering of Chriſt, which he did or was to endure, beyond the ſhedding of his Blood and yielding up his life upon the Croſs.

39. What God might have done (had he ſo pleaſed) without any other conſideration, but only by virtue of his own abſolute Authority; if he has rather choſen to do it for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, and in conſideration of that Obedience which he performed, and thoſe Sufferings which he underwent, who ſhall dare to find fault with him, or pretend to be wiſer than he? Now that *it is for the ſake of Chriſt, and of his Obedience and Sufferings, that God vouchſafes to us the Pardon of our Sins, and makes us the offer of everlaſting Happineſs*, is ſo plainly declared in many places of the Holy Scriptures, that nothing can be more. And ſince I find

God's ſending of Chriſt to be ſet forth as an inſtance of his Love, not to ſome few particular perſons only, but even to the whole World; and ſince Chriſt is ſaid to have died for all, and to have been a Propitiation for the ſins of the World, without any exception; I cannot but conclude, that all men who ever were, or are, or ſhall be, might have been, or may be the better for Chriſt and his Sufferings, if through their own default they have not, or ſhall not forfeit that Benefit which was deſigned them. And as it is not diſputed, but that the ancient Patriarchs, who by Faith foreſaw the coming of Chriſt, had a ſhare

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in that Redemption which he wrought, altho they died before he came into the World; ſo to me it ſeems to ſtand with a great deal of reaſon, that even thoſe perſons who never heard any thing of Chriſt, may yet for his ſake find Mercy from God; becauſe God, who perfectly knows the moſt ſecret Inclinations of all Hearts, may clearly foreſee, that if the knowledge of Chriſt had been propoſed and offered unto them, they would have owned him, and ſubmitted unto his Goſpel; which our Saviour tells us, was the very caſe of *Tyre* and *Sidon*; and for which reaſon he declares that they ſhould receive a milder Doom than *Chorazin*

and *Bethſaida* in the day of Judgment, *Mat.* 11. 21, 22. And how far this may extend to all ſuch as labour under very ſtrong Prejudices, altho not ſtrictly invincible, I think that God is the only proper Judge.

40. But however God may think fit to deal with thoſe, who are either ignorant of, or ſtrongly prejudiced againſt the Chriſtian Religion; yet the manner of his proceeding with true Believers is plainly enough declared. All thoſe who receive and own the Chriſtian Faith are not to be looked upon as ſo many ſeparate perſons; each of them believing ſuch and ſuch Doctrines; but are always repreſented

preſented in Scripture as Joyned together in one Society or Body, which is called the Church, of which Chriſt Jeſus is the chief or Head; and under an obligation to live in communion and fellowſhip one with another, under thoſe Laws and Conſtitutions which Chriſt has given them; but not, that I can find in Scripture, obliged to joyn with, or ſubmit to, any one perſon, as the Vicar of Chriſt and the viſible Head of the Church upon Earth. For if Chriſt had appointed any ſuch perſon as his Deputy upon Earth, he muſt either have declared a matter of ſuch conſequence with great plainneſs and evidence, or elſe it would be very

hard to find fault with any man for being miſtaken in it: Whereas the Arguments which thoſe of the *Church* of *Rome* bring to prove, either that ſuch a Vicar there muſt be, or that St. *Peter* the Apoſtle was the Man, or that the Pope or Biſhop of *Rome* (and not the Biſhop of *Antioch*) is the Succeſſour of St. *Peter* both in his Biſhoprick and Authority; are all ſo weak and precarious, ſo forced and perplexed, and ſo fully confuted by the Proteſtant Divines, that nothing in my Opinion but Blindneſs of Underſtanding, or worldly Intereſt can prevail with the Members of that Church, ſtill to inſiſt upon them Now that *Chriſt inſtituted but one Church*, in which

which all true Believers and good livers, are for ever to be compriſed, is very plain. And altho, through the Miſtakes and Perverſeneſs of Man, this Church is rent and divided into oppoſite, and contending parts, and parties; yet this does not hinder but that according to its true and primitive Conſtitution, it is, or ought to be one, (as a Kingdom or Common-wealth by its Laws and Conſtitutions is but one Society, altho there may ariſe Factions and different Intereſts in it) nor ſhall any Man be eſteemed as a Member of the Church before God, who is not ready and willing, according to the beſt of his power and knowledge, to maintain

the Unity of it, and that upon those very Terms, and none other, which Christ has appointed, as near as possibly he can find and apprehend them. Moreover, that all the Laws and Constitutions on which Christ has founded the Church, and by which he would have it regulated, are exactly agreeable unto the Rules of sound Morality, and the Will of God, cannot be so much as doubted; and therefore it is truly said, that *the Church is Holy*, altho every particular Member thereof has both his frailties and his sins; which yet he must repent of, and so become holy as the Church is holy, or else he violates one of the main and funda-

fundamental Laws, and ſo becomes as it were an Out-law of the Church, and forfeits his part in all the Privileges that belong unto that Society. And whereas, before the coming of Chriſt, the People of *Iſrael* did enjoy more of the Favour of God, and had greater privileges and advantages, on the ſcore of their being God's choſen and peculiar People, than any, or all other Nations of the World; The Goſpel of Chriſt, on the contrary, now looks upon all as equally entitled unto God's Favour (and the advantages thereon depending) who take care duly to qualifie themſelves for it. So that whereas formerly *the Church* (that is, the cho-

ſen People of God) might have been ſaid to be particular, as being in a manner limited to one Nation or People; now on the contrary, it is *Catholick*, that is to ſay, univerſal, as being no way confined to one place or Nation; all People being equally choſen by God in Chriſt, who will receive and love according to the Goſpel.

41. In thoſe ſeveral Revelations which God was pleaſed to make of himſelf after the Fall of Man, unto *Adam*, to *Abraham*, and to the People of *Iſrael*, there was ſtill a plain intimation given them, that in the time to come there ſhould an extraordinary Perſon ariſe in the World, who ſhould

ſhould yet more clearly make known the Will of God to Mankind. But when Chriſt, who was That Perſon, did accordingly come, and ſend his Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel over all the Earth; he neither ſuggeſted to them, nor they unto the World, that any other Revelation was ever after to be expected; But always gave them to underſtand, that God had in the Goſpel compleated and finiſhed all that declaration which he intended to make of Himſelf, or his Will, unto Mankind, until the general Judgment and Diſſolution of the World. If therefore the Holy Scripture had given me no manner of aſſurance of the perpetuity of the

the Church; my own Reaſon would have been enough to make me conclude, that God in his Providence will ſo order the matter, as that *the Chriſtian Religion*, being the only known and ordinary means of eternal Salvation, *ſhall never be wholly extinguiſhed* while the World laſts, ſo as to ſtand in need of any new Revelation to revive and reſtore it. But that there ſhall always be a certain Company of Men, evidently conſpicuous to the World, teaching and profeſſing the true Chriſtian Religion, without any Errour or Corruption in Doctrine or Worſhip, is what I can no where find promiſed or foretold, either by Chriſt or any of

of his Apoſtles. On the contrary, there are ſeveral paſſages in the New Teſtament, which do plainly ſeem to foretell that, in proceſs of time, moſt pernicious Doctrines and practices ſhould prevail and take place, even amongſt the generality of thoſe who ſhould profeſs themſelves to be Diſciples of Chriſt. And whoſoever ſhall but lightly compare the ſtate of Chriſtianity for ſeveral Centuries before the Reformation, with that Draught of it which is left us by Chriſt and his Apoſtles in the Holy Scriptures, muſt, if he be impartial, I think be fully convinced of the truth of thoſe Predictions.

42. Whether or no *God* has,

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or does at any time communicate or bestow any extraordinary Grace or Assistance upon those, who are no visible Members of the Church, but altogether strangers unto that Revelation which he has made of himself, is a question which the virtuous lives and heroick actions of some brave Heathens make it hard positively to determine in the negative. But that *he will give* so much *Grace and strength to every one who shall become a Member of Christ's Church*, as that thereby they may (if the fault be not their own) sufficiently qualifie themselves for eternal Happiness, by the performance of those things which he requires on their part to be done,

done, is what I think no man can doubt of, who does but in general conſider the Mercy and Love which God deſigned, even unto all men, but more eſpecially unto the Church, in ſending our Saviour Chriſt Jeſus into the world; altho there were not any particular Promiſes of this nature in the Goſpel: And that this *Grace and ability to do good is in Scripture aſcribed unto the Miniſtry and Influence of the Holy Ghoſt upon the hearts and minds of true Believers*, is plain and generally owned by all Chriſtians. But that this influence of God's Spirit does not work ſo uncontrollably, but that it may be reſiſted, and even wholly rejected and loſt,

loſt, is I think ſufficiently obvious, as well from Reaſon and Experience, as form thoſe paſſages of the Holy Scripture wherein we are exhorted not to quench the Spirit, but to walk in, and be led by, the Spirit, and the like; which were apparently needleſs and to no purpoſe, if the operations of the Holy Spirit upon our Hearts were ſo ſtrong as that we could not chuſe but comply with them. Now *the things which God requires* to be performed *on our part*, in order to life everlaſting, *are* apparent, and can be no more but to believe thoſe Truths which he has made known, which is called *Faith*; and to obſerve thoſe Precepts which he

he has commanded, which is called *Obedience*. And as I have already ſhewn that theſe things are required from no man beyond the meaſures of poſſibility, Part 1. §. 14. So does the Scripture moſt fully aſſure us, that *God will* in them make a very ſufficient allowance for the ignorance and frailty, and even for the perverſneſs of our Nature; and will not only be merciful unto our Weakneſſes and ordinary Failings, but will pardon and *forgive even our greateſt and moſt wilful Sins, upon our true and hearty Repentance, which is a part of our Obedience:* And as for the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which is ſaid to be abſolutely unpardonable, I do not

not think it needful to enquire here into the Nature and Conſequence of it, but ſhall refer my Reader to that excellent Sermon of Dr. *Tillotſon*, the late Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*, upon that ſubject. But here it is highly neceſſary that we ſhould all take that Caution, which both Reaſon and the Holy Scripures do give us, *viz.* That we ſhould not preſume ſo much upon God's Mercy and Lenity, as from hence to take occaſion of going on in our Wickedneſs: For Kindneſs thus abuſed will certainly turn into the higheſt Wrath, and much increaſe the Damnation of a Sinner.

43. I am inclined to think, that thoſe Arguments which

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are drawn from the nature of the Humane Soul it ſelf are not by themſelves ſufficient to prove that it is immortal; but on the contrary, that the eternal duration of any created Being depends not ſo much upon its own Nature, as upon the Will of God, who created it. But as Reaſon alone ſuggeſts unto us, that there is a Life to come after this, Part 1. §. 13. And that Man was at firſt deſigned by God unto life eternal, (Part 2. §. 29.) ſo does the Holy Scripture moſt clearly aſſure us, that *they who perform what God requires, ſhall be happy to all Eternity; and they who do not ſo, ſhall be miſerable without end.* The reconcilableneſs of which

which with God's Juſtice and Mercy I have accounted for §. 17. But wherein this Happineſs of the righteous ſhall conſiſt, we can but very imperfectly tell; and whether the Puniſhment of the wicked ſhall literally be in everlaſting Fire, or whether that expreſſion be only made uſe of Metaphorically, to ſignifie the greatneſs of the Torment, I think it not neceſſary to determine. But both my own Reaſon and ſome places of Scripture do ſeem ſtrongly to ſuggeſt, that neither the Reward of good men, nor the Puniſhment of the evil, ſhall be equal unto all; but greater or leſs according as they have exceeded one another in the Holineſs or Wickedneſs

Wickedneſs of their Lives.

44. That all Men are mortal, is ſufficiently teſtified by our daily Experience: But that the Souls of Men immediately upon their ſeparation from their Bodies are not in a ſtate of Inſenſibility; but are ſtraitway conveyed into a ſtate, either of Joy or Miſery, ſeems very apparent to me from St. *Paul*'s deſire to be diſſolved that he might be with Chriſt; from our Saviours Promiſe unto the Thief upon the Croſs; and from the Story or Parable of the Rich man and *Lazarus*; as alſo from ſome other intimations which the Holy Scripture gives us. But ſince *there is*, one day, *to be a general Judg-*

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ment of all mankind before the Tribunal of Christ, where every man must receive his Sentence for eternal, either Happiness or Misery (as the Holy Scripture does assure us) It seems not irrational to judge that neither the righteous nor the wicked do receive their full and final portion until that Judgment be passed upon them. I know not therefore how to condemn those, who anciently took up the Custom of praying for their deceased Friends, who had lived holily and died piously, that they might find favour and acceptance at the general Judgment and have their portion of Glory augmented; But I can by no means approve of those

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who upon ſuch pitiful ſuggeſtions have preſumed to determine that there is ſuch a place as Purgatory, where the Souls of men are to be purged and ſuffer a temporary Puniſhment before their admiſſion into Heaven. And altho I look upon their praying for the dead to be a miſtake, rather than a ſin, yet their taking of Mony for ſo doing, and raiſing ſuch a Revenue upon that Fund, I look upon to be a moſt ungodly Cheat and Impoſition upon the People.

45. Altho I do not apprehend that there is any natural decay in the general frame and ſtructure of this World, yet it is certain, that by the Power

Power of God, who made it, it may, whenever he pleaſes, be deſtroyed and diſſolved; and the Scripture aſſures us, that it ſhall be ſo *at the time of the general Judgment*; at which time alſo *there ſhall be an univerſal Reſurrection of the Bodies of all thoſe who have died*, and a change of thoſe who ſhall be then alive. But whether all the ſame individual Particles of each mans Body which have been laid down in the earth, ſhall be raiſed and reunited again to their Souls, I look upon to be a needleſs Enquiry. What St. *Paul* ſays upon this Argument, 1 *Cor.* 15. 35. does abundantly ſatisfie me; the purport of whoſe words I take to be this, *viz.* That God,

God, who being the Author of Nature, has given ſuch a vegetative power to a Grain of Corn, that when it is thrown into the Ground, and there macerated and diſſolved, it ſprings up again, and brings forth a Body ſuitable and proper to its ſelf; that that ſame God, I ſay, both can and will at the laſt day, from the dead and diſſolved Bodies of Men, raiſe up ſuch Bodies, as ſhall pleaſe himſelf. And as there is a continual and great change of Particles in the Humane Body, between the Birth and the Grave; ſo I ſee not what Abſurdity would follow if we ſhould allow alſo that there is a like change between the Grave and the Reſurrection.

46. And thus I have endeavoured to give a brief and plain account of that part of Chriſtianity which is purely or chiefly doctrinal; which upon the moſt ſtrict ſearch that I have been able to make, I think is exactly agreeable to the tenour and main deſign of the Holy Scriptures, and no way contradictory to the Principles of plain and ſound Reaſon. And if in many other Points of Speculation, which by ſome are adopted into Religion, I am either wholly ignorant, or perhaps doubtful and undetermined, or, it may be, miſtaken; Yet if to the Belief which I have here profeſſed, I do ſuperadd a virtuous and Chriſtian courſe of

of life, I hope there is no moderate Christian, who does not in effect make it a part of his Religion to be uncharitable, but will allow that I may be saved. But wherein this virtuous and Christian life consists, and what are the Duties which the Gospel obliges us all to perform (whether they are the Duties of pure Morality, as to love God and our Neighbour; or those of positive institution, as to be Baptized, to receive the Holy Communion &c.) is to be the subject of the Third and last part of this small Work; to which therefore, I now proceed.

A *Gentleman's Religion.*

PART III.

1. ALL the Commands of God, and consequently *all the Duties of a Christian*, *are* reducible to these Two; *viz. To abstain from that which is evil, and to do that which is good, according to his ability.* Those actions I call good, which either are eternally agreeable unto the nature, circumstances and mutual relations of Persons and Things,

Things, and therefore for ever to be approved of by every impartial rational Being (as I have ſaid Part 2. §. 18.) for which we muſt appeal to every mans Reaſon (as we do to his Eyes, without any other Demonſtration, to prove that the Sun ſhines) or elſe are expreſly commanded by God, of his own poſitive will and pleaſure (to whom, as being his Creatures, we all owe an intire Obedience) for which we muſt have our recourſe to the Holy Scriptures of the New Teſtament only; all the poſitive Inſtitutions and Ordinances of the Moſaick Law, which were given by God to the People of *Iſrael*, being abrogated, and the Ob-

ligation of them annulled by our Saviour Christ; Altho the moral part of it, which contains the Precepts and Rules of eternal good and evil, and wherein the very life and soul of that Law consisted, be not only abetted and confirmed, but also very much improved by him. And such actions as are contrary to good, that is to say, either disagreeable to the nature and circumstances of Things and Persons, or else positively forbidden by God; I call evil. I am indeed of opinion, that in the Holy Scriptures we have not only the positive Commands of God, whereby some things, which otherwise would have been indifferent, are enjoyned

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or forbidden; but alſo, either in particular, or at leaſt in general, a ſufficient account of all thoſe actions which are eternally good or evil, and therefore to be done or avoided by us; And this deſigned by Almighty God for the direction and inſtruction of thoſe Men, who have not ability to dive into, and diſcover thoſe things by the ſtrength of their Reaſon. And therefore, in order to deſcribe the whole Duty of a Chriſtian, it might be enough for me to collect the Precepts and Prohibitions which God has given us in his Word, and to vouch no other Authority or reaſon, but his Will for them. But becauſe every mans Duty will pro-

ligation of them annulled by our Saviour Chriſt; Altho the moral part of it, which contains the Precepts and Rules of eternal good and evil, and wherein the very life and ſoul of that Law conſiſted, be not only abetted and confirmed, but alſo very much improved by him. And ſuch actions as are contrary to good, that is to ſay, either diſagreeable to the nature and circumſtances of Things and Perſons, or elſe poſitively forbidden by God; I call evil. I am indeed of opinion, that in the Holy Scriptures we have not only the poſitive Commands of God, whereby ſome things, which otherwiſe would have been indifferent, are enjoyned

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or forbidden; but alſo, either in particular, or at leaſt in general, a ſufficient account of all thoſe actions which are eternally good or evil, and therefore to be done or avoided by us; And this deſigned by Almighty God for the direction and inſtruction of thoſe Men, who have not ability to dive into, and diſcover thoſe things by the ſtrength of their Reaſon. And therefore, in order to deſcribe the whole Duty of a Chriſtian, it might be enough for me to collect the Precepts and Prohibitions which God has given us in his Word, and to vouch no other Authority or reaſon, but his Will for them. But becauſe every mans Duty will pro-

bably make the greater impreſſion upon his mind, when he is ſatisfied, as to the reaſonableneſs of it, as well as convinced of its obligation; I ſhall endeavour, as I proceed, firſt to infer as much of our Duty as I can, from the nature and circumſtances of Things and Perſons; and then to ſuperadd, where there is occaſion, what God has poſitively ordained and commanded as to any point; And this with the ſame conciſeneſs that I have obſerved in my Second Part, neither enlarging upon thoſe Arguments, nor reciting thoſe Texts of Scripture, which I ſuppoſe my Reader to be able to call to mind upon the leaſt hint of them,

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2. To begin then: Since *God* is the moſt perfect and excellent Being in Himſelf; and ſo loving and beneficent to Us, It follows, that *we ought to love him in the higheſt degree that poſſibly we can*; And true and compleat Love, as it is an act of one perſon exerted towards another, as its object, conſiſts in an unfeigned deſire, Firſt, of always doing what may be truly grateful and acceptable to the perſon beloved; and Secondly, of enjoying and being with him as much as may be. The more ardent and zealous we are in our love to God, the better undoubtedly it is; And we ſhould ſtrive to engage our Affections, as well as our Rea-

ſon and our Will, unto him from whom we have received all things: But yet this Love is not to be meaſured, or judged of, by the earneſtneſs of thoſe ſuddain motions, which ſometimes may ariſe within us, upon the contemplation of God's Excellency and Goodneſs; becauſe to be thus *Paſſionately* affected is not wholly in our Power; and ſomtimes leaſt ſo, when we moſt earneſtly deſire it. But the true and certain way of judging whether we love God, or not, is by examining whether we are ſtedfaſt in our Reſolutions, and accordingly diligent in our Endeavours, conſtantly to obey him, and keep all his Commandments; which

which is the only way to pleaſe, and conſequently to enjoy and for ever be with him: And where the Love of God is thus firmly rooted in the *Will*, and brings forth plenty of Fruit in the life and actions, it is certainly nevertheleſs acceptable to him, altho it does not ſo paſſionately move our Affections as we could wiſh or deſire: And as all the Duties which we owe unto Almighty God, are derived from, and do depend upon that, of loving of him; or rather indeed are contained in it, ſo is it very evident, that they are all to be judged of by the ſame forementioned Rule; that is to ſay, not ſo much by the ſtrength of an inward

ward Impulſe upon the Mind (which is a thing not under our Command) as by the ſteady agreeableneſs of our Will and Actions, unto all ſuch Principles, as are right and good.

3. Since God is the moſt excellent and perfect, and conſequently the moſt worthy, of all Beings, that are, or can be; from hence it will follow, that *we ought to honour him with the greateſt Honour that may be*. Now to honour any perſon is, in other words, inwardly to eſteem, and outwardly to ſhew our Reſpect to him. Our inward Eſteem of God conſiſts in a due Acknowledgment of his Being and Attributes; and our outward

ward Reſpect to him, is to be ſhewn, as well by abſtaining from all actions which may ſavour of any Neglect or Irreverence towards him, as by performing all ſuch as may appear to be ſuitable, both to his own Excellency and our Dependence upon him.

4. Since God is preſent in all places, and knows all, even the moſt ſecret things; and therefore cannot poſſibly be deceived, or impoſed on; *We ſhould*, on this conſideration, *be very watchful and careful, upon all occaſions, how we behave our ſelves in his Preſence:* And, methinks, it is a moſt ſhameful and deplorable thing, that Men commonly ſcruple, not to do thoſe things

in the ſight of God, which they would be afraid, or aſhamed it ſhould be known, or even ſuſpected, of them, by Men like themſelves.

5. Since God is moſt true; from hence it will follow, that *we ought to believe whatſoever he ſays or makes known*, how improbable ſoever otherwiſe it might ſeem to us. But the true eſtimate of ſuch belief is not to be made by the clearneſs and ſtrength of our ſpeculative Aſſent unto thoſe Truths, which he has propoſed to our Underſtanding (for to receive a Truth without any Doubts or Scruples, which ſometimes do unaccountably force themſelves upon us, even in the cleareſt caſes, is not always in our

our power) But rather by the conſtant ſuitableneſs of our lives unto the profeſſion of ſuch Doctrines as we receive and own. And he who has but a weak Faith, and yet leads a good life, altho he is not qualified for doubtful Diſputations, is nevertheleſs a true Believer; becauſe his Belief anſwers the main end and deſign of the Goſpel; which I have ſhewn to be Virtue and Morality, Part 1. §. 42. Nor can there (for example) be a better Evidence, that a man does really and ſufficiently Believe the Truth of a life to come, than when he is induſtrious and diligent in preparing for it; whatever Doubts or Scruples he may have, in point

point of Speculation, about it.

6. Since God's Power is infinite, and his Authority uncontrolable; it follows, that *we ought to fear him* (and ſo much the more, becauſe of our natural propenſity to ſin) becauſe he has it always in his Power to make us miſerable here, and eternally ſo hereafter. But he cannot be ſaid to fear God moſt (that is, moſt truly) who is poſſeſſed with the greateſt dread and terrour at the thoughts of his Wrath or Judgments; for then the Devils, who tremble, or wicked Wretches, who deſpair of God's Mercy, would be the beſt performers of this Duty: But he is the trueſt Fearer of God,

God, who always takes the greateſt care not to offend him; the Fear of him being never originally deſigned to torment and diſquiet our Minds, but only to be ſuch a Check upon us, as to keep us in due Awe and Obedience.

7. Since every ſin is an Offence, both againſt a gracious and a powerful God, and of every dangerous conſequence to the perſon who commits it; And ſince nothing can poſſibly be concealed from God, it follows, that *we ought to be* deeply concerned, and *truly ſorrowful for every ſin which we commit, and* by no means to palliate or frame Excuſes for them, but *freely to own and confeſs them to him.* But the truth

truth of this Sorrow is not to be meaſured by the Paſſionateneſs of it, or the Tears which it produces (which, tho ſometimes good ſigns, yet, too often produce but little effect) but by the hearty reformation of life that follows: And he only can be ſaid, to any purpoſe, either to be ſorry for his ſins, or to confeſs them to God; who is careful for the time to come to forſake them.

8. Since God is Almighty, he is certainly able; and ſince he loves us, he cannot but be willing, to do every thing that is beſt and fitteſt for us, if we, by our own faults, do not provoke him to the contrary: From whence it follows,

lows, that, as long as we ſerve him faithfully, *we ought, in all our wants and exigencies, to truſt and relie upon him.* And if he does not relieve or help us in ſuch a manner as we deſire; *we ought to bear whatever Afflictions we lie under, patiently and contentedly*; as well knowing, that God takes no delight in grieving us; but only corrects and keeps us under, in order to our eternal good. And to demonſtrate our Truſt in God, and ſubmiſſion to his chaſtiſing hand; we muſt never attempt, by any unlawful means, to ſupply any of our Wants, or free our ſelves from any, even the moſt grievous preſſures: Altho, at the ſame time, honeſt labour

labour and induſtry (yet ſtill with ſubmiſſion to God's Will) for the compaſſing of any thing which is lawful and good, is not only allowed, but commended and required.

9. But ſince God is a free Agent, and ſince all the good which we have, or are capable of, comes from him, and depends altogether on his Power and over-ruling Providence; *we ought to pray to him for whatſoever we ſtand in need of*; and that he would bleſs all our honeſt Labours with ſucceſs. But becauſe, often, if we had the very things which we deſire, they would, at the laſt, tend to our hurt; and becauſe he knows what is fit for us, much

much better than we our ſelves; therefore *we ought always to pray, that his Will ſhould ever take place rather than our own.* And ſince we can have no reaſon to doubt of his Love, we ought to aſſure our ſelves, that we ſhall receive either the very things we pray for, or elſe that which is altogether as good for us, if our ſins obſtruct it not.

10. And the very ſame conſiderations, which prompt us to make our Prayers to God in all our wants, do ſufficiently demonſtrate, that *we ought to return Thanks unto him for all the Bleſſings which we have received:* Amongſt which thoſe Afflictions which have at any time reclaimed us from ſin, and

and brought us to a ſenſe of our Duty, ought, I think, to be placed in the chiefeſt rank: And the only Demonſtration of a truly thankful Heart to God, is the making a pious and honeſt uſe, to his Glory, of all thoſe Bleſſings which we daily receive from him: Nor can there be any thing more abſurd, than for a man to pretend to give God Thanks with his Lips, who does not alſo do it, more to the purpoſe, in his Life.

11. As God's Juſtice and Veracity are a reaſon beyond exception, why *we ſhould without Anxiety depend on all his Promiſes*; ſo the great Promiſe which he has made us, being that of everlaſting Happineſs;

pineſs; for our more effectual attaining unto which, he has ſent his Son our Saviour Chriſt Jeſus to ſuffer for us; *It is* therefore accordingly *our Duty to hope for eternal Salvation*; that is to ſay, to expect the performance of what God has promiſed, and the enjoyment of what Chriſt has purchaſed for us. But this hope is to be ſhewn not by the ſtrength of our Confidence that we ſhall be ſaved (in which it is very poſſible that a man may deceive himſelf) but by our conſtant care in duly performing what God requires, on our parts, in order to Salvation: For he only who is diligent in doing the work, does, with any reaſon,

ſon, expect, or hope for the promiſed Reward.

12. As *we are obliged* to pray unto God for all that we want, and to hope for eternal Salvation from him; ſo the Holy Scripture directs us, *to ground all our hopes of Happineſs upon the Sufferings of Jeſus Chriſt, and to offer up all our Prayers in his Name*, as hoping only for his ſake to be accepted, who is repreſented as our only Mediatour and Interceſſour with God. Whoſoever therefore offers to joyn the Merits, Mediation or Interceſſion of any Saint, together with Chriſt Jeſus, either to ſtrengthen his hopes of Salvation, or to make his Devotions more ſurely to be accepted by God

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as he ſeems to diſtruſt the Mediation of Chriſt, as if, alone, it were imperfect and inſufficient; ſo he acts not only without any Warrant from, but even contrary to the plain tenour of the Holy Scriptures.

13. That it is abſurd to attempt, and impoſſible to make, any bodily or viſible Picture or Image to repreſent God, who is both incorporeal and inviſible, is moſt evident beyond doubt or denyal: And when any ſuch Repreſentations are made with that deſign, and expoſed to the view of the People, the natural conſequence of them, muſt needs be to beget wrong Notions of God in the Minds at leaſt of

the more ignorant ſort: For ſuch as any thing is repreſented to them, ſuch they will be apt to conceive it in all points to be. My Reaſon therefore alone would ſufficiently conclude, that *it is unlawful to make any ſort of Picture or Image to repreſent God*, altho he had not ſo poſitively forbid it in the Holy Scripture; nor ſo expreſsly declared himſelf a jealous God in that particular.

14. In all Caſes where one man may deceive another to his great damage; it is reaſonable that he, who apprehends ſuch danger, ſhould not depend upon another man, except he firſt has good ſecurity given him of his Truth and Fidelity.

Fidelity. Now many times the beſt, or indeed the only, ſecurity which can be given in ſuch caſes, is a ſolemn Appeal to Almighty God (who is the Searcher of all Hearts, and the Puniſher of all Wickedneſs) as expecting and freely offering one's ſelf to his Wrath and Vengeance, in caſe he prevaricates in what he aſſerts or promiſes: And this is what we call by the Name of an Oath. And ſince he who takes an Oath (I mean with due ſeriouſneſs and conſideration) does therein make an evident acknowledgment of ſome of the principal Attributes of God; *viz.* his Omniſcience, Juſtice, Truth, and Power; it follows that *an*

Oath, duly taken, is an act of Honour and Reverence towards God; and consequently, *is not*, in its self, *unlawful or evil*: But *if an Oath be taken rashly, or unadvisedly, or unnecessarily, or in trivial cases*; *it is* a lessening and undervaluing of the Divine Majesty (which ought always to be treated with the profoundest Reverence) and, consequently, *sinful* and unlawful. And this is all that I can conceive to be forbidden by our Blessed Saviour, *Mat.* 5. 34. Nor can I apprehend that, that place contains an universal prohibition of all swearing whatsoever: For, besides that the very Context in the preceding Verse does most evidently limit

limit the diſcourſe to ſuch Oaths as are purely voluntary, and therefore altogether unneceſſary; There is neither Reaſon nor Precedent to induce any one to believe that our Saviour would univerſally forbid any thing which has nothing of Evil or Malignity in its nature: And ſome even of the beſt of Men, not only before, but ſince the coming of Chriſt, and even the Bleſſed Angels themſelves, we are aſſured in Scripture, have ſworn upon ſome occaſions with great ſolemnity. Nor do the Holy Scriptures, in other places, where mention is made of the taking of an Oath, ſpeak of it as a thing unlawful, or forbidden, or any way

univerſally evil in its ſelf, but altogether the contrary: Nor did our Bleſſed Saviour, that we can find, deſign to deprive Princes or Magiſtrates of any part of that lawful Power which they had over their Subjects before his coming; who, every where, were inveſted with a Right of exacting an Oath from Them, when it ſhould be neceſſary, either for the peace and ſecurity of the Common-wealth, or for the ending of Differences between private parties. And as for that paſſage of St. *James* 5. 12. which is by ſome urged againſt ſwearing in any caſe whatſoever; It, being no more but a recapitulation of our Saviours words

words which were juſt now mentioned, needs no other Anſwer than what I have already given. But ſince the very nature and deſign of an Oath is to invoke God, that thereby a Man may give aſſurance to another of his truth and fidelity; it follows, that *to affirm any thing upon Oath, beyond what the Man, who ſwears, knows to be true; or not to perform what he has upon his Oath promiſed, is a ſin.* And ſince he who impoſes upon another by doubtful and equivocal words, does as much deceive him, as he who ſpeaks a down-right Falſity; from hence it will follow, that ſuch *a deceitful Oath is* altogether as contrary to the

nature and deſign of an Oath, and conſequently as *unlawful* as a falſe one. But altho *an Oath lays an obligation upon a Man to do whatever he has ſworn*, yet *if a Man ſwears to do any thing which is a ſin*, and contrary to ſome former Obligation, under which he indiſpenſably lyes to God or Man, *he can not in this caſe be obliged to keep his Oath*, but is bound to repent of it. For, beſides that it is not reaſonable, that any mans own act ſhould free him from any Obligation under which he lyes to another; it is plain, that an Oath can neither alter the nature of a ſin, nor make it lawful to commit it. And ſince the deſign of an Oath in its own nature

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is to oblige him to performance that takes it; and since the Name of God ought never unneceſſarily to be invoked; it follows, that *where a Man ought not to keep an Oath, he ought, not on any account to take it.*

15. According to the Cuſtoms of different places, there have divers Ceremonies and Forms of words been introduced in the taking of an Oath; ſome of them grounded upon Reaſon, and others taken up through miſtake in imitation. Thus, probably, whereas it may have been a Cuſtom in ſome places in an Oath to invoke the Vengeance of God upon ones *head*; from hence, likely, might ariſe

that Form of ſwearing by the Head; and, in imitation thereof, by the Hand, or other parts of the Body. And whereas it was uſual to take ſolemn Oaths, in extraordinary caſes, in the Temple, or at the Altar, and, with us at this time, laying the Hand upon the Holy Scriptures; from hence might ariſe the Forms of ſwearing by the Temple, the Altar, the Bible, *&c.* But here it muſt be noted, that the nature of an Oath being for aſſurance, and conſiſting therefore altogether in the intention of the parties, *viz.* as well of him who requires it, as of him who gives it; *He may be ſaid really and truly to ſwear,* not only who makes

makes uſe of ſuch a Form and Ceremony as is accuſtomed or preſcribed in any certain place, but he *who any ways ſignifies to another an intention to oblige himſelf under the penalty of God's Wrath and Vengeance:* And for the ſame reaſon *the joynt intention of both parties,* as it appears fairly to be ſignified (without any place for Fraud or Colluſion) *muſt needs be the true meaſure of the obligation of every Oath.*

16. When a Man promiſes a thing, and obliges himſelf thereto, not to any other Man, but only to God alone; this is what is commonly called *a Vow*; and, *comes* ſo exactly *under the ſame Rules with a Promiſory Oath* (as will preſently

ſently appear to whoſoever reads the two foregoing Sections) that I need not again particularly repeat them. But it is a very neceſſary caution to be obſerved in all Oaths, and more eſpecially to be taken care of in Vows; that *a Man ſhould never voluntarily oblige himſelf to any thing but what he is well aſſured is within his power to perform*; I mean with the help of that common Aſſiſtance and Grace which God has promiſed to all that ſeek it. For if a Man goes beyond this, and tyes ſuch Burdens upon himſelf as he is not ſufficiently ſure of ſtrength to bear; beſides the preſumption of the thing, it muſt needs involve his

his Conſcience in many Difficulties and Perplexities.

17. Since there is no other Being whatſoever, which for Power, Goodneſs, or excellency of Nature can any way be equalled to, or compared with, Almighty God; from hence it will follow, that all *theſe foregoing Duties, which we owe unto* God on the account and ſuppoſition of the Tranſcendency of his Nature and Attributes, *are not any of them to be paid unto any Thing or Perſon beſides himſelf.* For that would be in effect to ſet up ſomewhat elſe as a God, or in the place of God, unto our ſelves. Let them then who ſeem either to love, or fear, or truſt in, any Thing or Perſon

Perſon as much or more than God; and who offer up their Prayers and Devotions unto any Saints or Angels; which ſeems to ſuppoſe their Omniſcience, and that they know the Secrets of Mens Hearts; and to argue ſome diſtruſt of God's Goodneſs and Readineſs to hear us; Let them, I ſay, and ſuch like perſons, conſider well with themſelves, how, they can anſwer theſe things to God, who is a jealous God. But ſince *every Man*, who is ſincere in Religion, *muſt neceſſarily ſuit his Worſhip and Duty to God according to the apprehenſions which he has of the Deity*; He who is convinced of the diſtinction

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of Perſons in the Unity of the God-head (of which I have endeavoured to give my Thoughts Part 2. §. 22.) *cannot*, I think, *but make the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghoſt, the joynt Objects of his Service and Devotion.* And why it ſhould not be both lawful and proper to invoke the Son and Holy Ghoſt, together with the Father, in our Prayers, as well as to be Baptized, and to Bleſs, in their Names, together with him (which are both I think acts of Divine Worſhip) I confeſs I can ſee no ſound reaſon that can be given. But if any man ſhall tell me, that, in the Worſhip of God, he dares proceed no farther than the Holy Scriptures

Scriptures will expresly warrant, and therefore that he can not invoke the Holy Ghost in his Prayers, because he there finds neither Precept for, nor Example of it (Judging no Man, but leaving every Man to stand or fall to his own Master) for my self I answer, that since God has made us reasonable Creatures, I can not but think that a clear, and rational Consequence from Scripture is as good a Warrant for any religious action, and lays as great an Obligation upon him that is convinced of it, as the most express Text: And if the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost be admitted (as I here suppose) to me, no Conse-

Conſequence ſeems to be clearer than that he is to be invoked and worſhiped, together with the Father and the Son.

18. Since the end to which God deſigns all Men, is eternal Happineſs in another life; Part 2. §. 29. To a capacity for which we are again, after our Fall, reſtored by Jeſus Chriſt, Part 2. §. 33, &c. It follows, that *we ought not to do any thing whereby we may miſs of this end, or be diverted from the proſecution of it; But on the contrary, that the whole courſe of our actions and endeavours ſhould ever be bent on the purſuit of it.*

19. No Man will ever be diligent in the purſuit of any thing

thing of which he ſeldom thinks, and rarely conſiders the benefit of obtaining, and the evil of miſſing it. If therefore we are obliged to be diligent in our endeavours after eternal Happineſs; *we ought to make the Joys of Heaven and the Torments of Hell the ſubject of our frequent Thoughts and Meditations.*

20. He who places his Happineſs, or any part of it, upon a wrong Object, will never be ſo diligent as he ought in the purſuit of that true Happineſs, to which he is deſigned by God; becauſe the ſtream of his Thoughts and Endeavours muſt needs, in the whole, or in part, be diverted, according as he apprehends

prehends his Happineſs to lie another way. Now that there is nothing in this World (except a good Conſcience, and the hope of eternal Life, which, tho they may be had *in* this World, yet are not *of* the World) that can any way make up a part of our real Happineſs, is abundantly demonſtrable from the vanity, uncertainty and ſhortneſs of all worldly Joys. He therefore who places any part of his Happineſs upon any thing belonging to this World, moſt certainly, places it upon a wrong Object. But whatſoever a Man propoſes to himſelf as the ultimate End of any of his actions, it is certain that, therein he places ſome part,

part, at leaſt, of his Happi-neſs: For that which is the ultimate End of any action of a Man, muſt be propoſed as the final ſatisfaction of ſome of his Deſires (for as far as any one's Deſire extends, ſo far off muſt be the End he aims at) and no Deſire of any Man can ever be finally ſatisfied, till it meets with that wherein he ſuppoſes his Happineſs (in whole or in part) to conſiſt. From hence then it will follow, that altho there are ſome Pleaſures and Satisfactions in this World, which may innocently be enjoyed, yet *No man ought to propoſe any worldly enjoyment as the ultimate End and Deſign of any of his Actions.* For this would be

be a placing his Happineſs, or ſome part of it, upon a wrong Object, and thereby a hinderance of his purſuit of the true Happineſs for which God deſigns him. To illuſtrate this, which otherwiſe may ſeem obſcure, by an Example or two. A Man may lawfully, without doubt, reliſh the Meat he eats (for to what other end did God give us the Senſe of Taſting) but the reaſon of his eating, at all times, ought to be to preſerve his Life and Health, that he may be the better able to do all thoſe things which God requires from him in order to his Salvation; this being the End for which God deſigns him, and which he therefore ought

ought always to pursue. But he who in eating designs no more than to gratifie his sensual Appetite, or to pamper his Body that he may have the greater enjoyment of the rest of the Pleasures of this World; acts below, or rather contrary to, the End he is designed for; and may justly be compared to the Beasts that perish. Thus also a Man may innocently be pleased to have the Garment he wears, decent and comely, because the Eye is naturally gratified with the beauty of any Object: But if a Man wears Cloths which are more fine and costly than some others, his reason ought to be that he may not (according to the humour of the world

world) be contemned for the Meaneſs or Sordidneſs of his Apparel ; but endeavour, by all fair ways, to preſerve ſuch a Reſpect among Men (who are very apt to judge by the outward appearance) as may enable him to do the more good in the world: But he who cloths himſelf like the Lillies of the Field, or *Solomon* in all his Glory, only that he may admire himſelf, or be taken notice of by others, for his remarkable Finery, is a vain perſon, and acts as fooliſhly as the Crow in the Fable, who clad himſelf in the Peacocks Feathers. And what I have here ſaid concerning Food and Raiment, may alſo be applyed to Riches and Honour,

Honour, and to all Pleasure which are not absolutely unlawful; and to every thing which Men aim at, or value in this World; which they may lawfully seek after and take delight in, as far as they may be Instruments of doing Good, or are consistent with their Christian Duty; but they must not place their Happiness, or any part of it, in them; for that would make them forgetful of Heaven, and necessarily involve them in the sins of Ambition, Covetousness, Voluptuousness, &c.

21. As we are obliged to do whatsoever God commands, and patiently to suffer whatsoever he, in his Providence, shall

shall think fit to lay or inflict upon us; so, for the same reasons, are we certainly bound to continue in this both doing and patiently suffering, until such time as he shall be pleased, of his own Will, to free and dismiss us from it. From whence it follows, that *no man ought*, upon any account, *to lay violent hands upon himself, or voluntarily contribute to the shortning of his own Life*, because he knows not but that God might be willing to exercise him yet farther, with Sufferings or other tryals, to his Glory, and the good of his own Soul. Nor ought any Servant, without leave or licence, to withdraw himself from the Service of his Ma-

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ſhall think fit to lay or inflict upon us; ſo, for the ſame reaſons, are we certainly bound to continue in this both doing and patiently ſuffering, until ſuch time as he ſhall be pleaſed, of his own Will, to free and diſmiſs us from it. From whence it follows, that *no man ought*, upon any account, *to lay violent hands upon himſelf, or voluntarily contribute to the ſhortning of his own Life*, becauſe he knows not but that God might be willing to exerciſe him yet farther, with Sufferings or other tryals, to his Glory, and the good of his own Soul. Nor ought any Servant, without leave or licence, to withdraw himſelf from the Service of his Ma-

ſter. And the ſame reaſon which forbids us to deſtroy our Lives, ſhould alſo keep us from putting them to any unreaſonable or unneceſſary hazard.

22. He who in Duty is obliged to any thing, lies alſo, of neceſſity, under an Obligation to qualifie himſelf as well as he can, and to ſeek after, and make uſe of all ſuch Means and Inſtruments as are neceſſary for the better executing and compaſſing that ſame thing to which he is ſo obliged. Since then *Health of Body, Knowledge and Underſtanding, and a competency of Riches, Power and Authority*, are neceſſary Qualifications and Inſtruments for the better perform-

performance of many of those Duties, to which we stand obliged by God's Law; it follows, that these *are things which every man, according to his capacity, ought to seek and endeavour after.* But we must not strive nor seek for any of these things by Ways or Means that are unlawful and wicked; for that would be, beforehand, to destroy and frustrate the very End and Design, for which alone they are to be sought and desired: namely Virtue, Piety and the Service of God.

23. On the other side; Whatsoever is an impediment or obstacle to the performance of any necessary Duty, we are bound, as far as we are

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23. On the other side; Whatsoever is an impediment or obstacle to the performance of any necessary Duty, we are bound, as far as we are

able, to suppress or remove it out of the way. Now our Reason being that which first leads us to the Knowledg of Religion, and always enables us rightly to understand and judge of our Duty; And since all violent Passions, and over-eager Affections, do disturb our Reason, and very much hinder the free use and exercise of it; It follows, that *we ought always so to govern our Passions and restrain all our Affections*, as that they may be wholly subservient to, and never over-rule or mis-lead, our Reason.

24. Since God is the Creatour, and therefore also the absolute Lord of all things; every thing certainly ought

by us to be always put and applyed to that very same end and use (and no other) for which it was intended by him, as far as we have any intimation of his design, either from Reason or Revelation. Hence then it will follow, that those Creatures which God has given us, to feed, sustain and keep us in health, that we may be the better able to do our Duty, and labour in our several Callings, ought not at any time (much less ordinarily) to be used to Excess, so as to impair our Health, or discompose our Reason, or any way hinder us in the performance of any Duty: And that Faculty of Generation, which

God has endowed us with, in order to the propagation of Mankind, ought not to be abuſed for the ſake of filthy ſenſual Pleaſure. Nor ought that plenty of Creatures, which God has beſtowed upon us for the ſervice of all Men, without exception, to be engroſſed into the hands of any certain Men, ſo as that others ſhould want the Neceſſaries of Life, whilſt they abound in Superfluity. By which it appears, that *Gluttony and Drunkenneſs, Luſt and Covetouſneſs are ſins*, and always to be avoided; and therefore, on the contrary, that *Temperance, Chaſtity, Charity, and Liberality are Duties*, and always to be practiſed.

25. Ex-

25. Experience assures us, that the Spirit of Man is of an active nature; and, rather than be altogether idle, will be apt to employ its self in that which is evil. Nor does a man ever lie more open to Temptation than when he has nothing at all to do. *He therefore that would keep himself innocent, must be careful always to avoid Idleness.* For besides that Idleness would prove a Snare to us; It is a shame and a sin. When there is so much of God's work to be done in the world (for the promoting of his Glory and the Publick good of Mankind) that any man, who pretends to be his Servant, should stand still, and not put his

helping hand to the carrying of it on. But as we cannot ſay that a Man is idle, when he lies down to ſleep; that, being thereby refreſhed, he may be the better able again to labour; ſo muſt we by no means paſs that Cenſure on him, who now and then ſpends ſome ſmall portion of his Time in ſome pleaſant and innocent Recreation; that, having his Thoughts hereby a little relaxed and diverted, he may be the fitter to return to Buſineſs of moment and conſequence. But as for thoſe perſons, whoſe whole life almoſt is nothing elſe but Diverſion; and who ſcarce ever ſet themſelves to any employment, whereby either God is glorified,

glorified, or others benefited; what can they expect but the same Sentence which is pronounced upon the idle and unprofitable Servant, *Mat.* 25. 26. And if, to be altogether idle and unemployed is not to be excused or justified; how much more are they to be condemned who are so frequently employed in such things as are evil and scandalous?

26. Since the right knowledge of our Duty arise, chiefly from a true judgment concerning the circumstances and qualifications of Things and Persons, it follows, that *every Man should endeavour*, as far as he is able, *to inform himself rightly*, and to frame true Notions, in all points, *of and*

concerning God, Himself, and other Men; to whom there are Duties owing; *and also of all those things which are the subjects of any of* those *Duties*; and in the true management whereof, such Duties do consist. For if he be mistaken in his Judgment concerning either of these, he must of necessity take wrong Measures in his actions. Thus, for Example, if a Man should not believe God to be eternal, most good, wise and powerful, *&c.* it would not be possible for him to love, honour and fear him in that degree that he ought to do; And if we do not always remember our selves to be frail Creatures, subject to Passions and Infirmities

firmities, of short continuance in this World, and that, whatever Excellency we may seem to have, we derive it wholly from God and his Providence, and not from our selves; we shall never be able so effectually as we ought, to govern our Passions, and restrain our Affections from the things of this World, and pursue that End for which God has designed us. And if we do not consider that other Men (whatever accidental Differences there may be between us) are equal to us in nature, that their Souls are as precious in God's sight as ours, that Christ died for them, as much as for us, &c. We shall not be inclined to behave

have our selves to them with that Justice, Charity and Humility which do evidently appear to be our Duty. And, lastly, if we do not frame a true Notion of the Vanity of the things of this World, and the Excellency of the Joys of Heaven; we shall never be able to prefer the later before the former, in such a measure as we ought to do.

27. Altho the chief Happiness of Mankind is reserved by God to be enjoyed in another life, by those who heartily strive for it whilst they are in this; yet can I find no reason to think that he has decreed us all, or any of us, to be absolutely miserable whilst we remain in this World. On the

the contrary, ſince God has originally a love for all Mankind in general, Part 2. §. 16. I cannot but conclude, that he always (even in this life) deſigns at leaſt ſome ſhare or beginning of Happineſs for every Man; and never afflicts, or ſuffers any Man to be afflicted, but only in order to his greater Happineſs hereafter; until ſuch time as he thinks it proper to pour out his Vengeance and final Deſtruction upon ſuch as have by their Wickedneſs altogether forfeited his Love and Favour. Since then God originally deſigns ſome meaſure or commencement of Happineſs to all Men, even in this life, as well as eternal Happi-

neſs

neſs hereafter; it follows, that we (who ought as much as we can to be ſubſervient to all God's Deſigns) ſhould endeavour as much as in us lies, to promote the Happineſs of every Man, both in relation to this World, and of that which is to come. Or in other terms, that *every Man ſhould endeavour to do as much good to all others as he can, and to hurt no man whatſoever, if he can avoid it.*

28. But if every Man always kept ſingly by himſelf, without any Society or Intercourſe with others; it would be impoſſible to do any good one to another: And therefore I conclude, that it is the Will of God that *Mankind*

ſhould

should live each with other in a state of Society. And to make us all the more sensible of the necessity and obligation that lies upon us thus to live with, and do good to others, God has so ordered the state and condition of all Mankind, that it is not possible for any Man long to subsist, much less to enjoy any sort of Comfort or satisfaction in this Life, without the good will and assistance of others; which he has no reason to expect, except he be ready upon all occasions to retaliate what he himself so continually stands in need of. And since God's original Love to Mankind is not confined to some certain persons, but universally extended

tended to all; I must need conclude, that he designs not only the Comfort and Happiness of some particulars; but universally of all Men whatsoever. And since the more universal the Society between Men is, the more universal the Happiness which thence results will be; it will evidently follow, that it is God's Will that every Man should behave himself after a sociable and friendly manner, to every other Man, without exception. And since there is no Man in the World, however weak and poor, or at never so great a distance from me, but it is possible that things may fall out so as that, one time or other, I may, in my

Distress,

Diſtreſs, ſtand in need of his Help and Friendſhip, my Reaſon tells me, that it is my Intereſt, as well as Duty, as much as I am able, beforehand to oblige every Man who comes in my way, by doing Offices of Civility and Kindneſs to him, as occaſion offers.

29. That God has given to Mankind in general the free Liberty to make uſe of all other Creatures for their ſupport and ſuſtenance, my Reaſon, as well as the Holy Scripture, does aſſure me; becauſe without ſome of them we could not preſerve our ſelves in being; and if we had not liberty to deſtroy others of them for our uſe, they would

in

in time ſo over-ſpread the Face of the Earth, as that we could not have any ſafe or convenient Habitation upon it. But if all theſe Creatures were always to remain in common, ſo that no Man ſhould have a Right to take poſſeſſion of any part of them to his own prticular uſe and diſpoſal, and to exclude others therefrom; the Conſequence muſt needs be perpetual Diſcord and Confuſion. For when I had prepared Food to ſuſtain my Hunger, or Rayment to defend me from the Cold; if every other Man ſhould have ſtill as good a Right thereto as I, any one might lawfully take it away from me; and if my Right were as good as

any

any others, I might alſo lawfully Defend my Poſſeſſion; from which ſtate of things Contention and Strife muſt eternally and unavoidably ariſe. I therefore conclude, that there muſt be ſome Laws of Property and Right; and that *every man muſt yield to others that which is their own*, or elſe there can be no ſuch thing as Society and Beneficence preſerved and kept up amongſt Mankind. Now in order to diſcover theſe ſame Laws of Right and Property, whereby every man is to know what is truly his own, I lay down this general Rule, as a thing moſt reaſonable, That, Whereas originally every Mans Right and Title to

every

every thing may be esteemed equal (God having given us all the Creatures in common, and not, by any act of his, divided to each Man his several Property) If there be any apparent, or but probable, ground why such or such a particular thing should be the Property of one Man rather than of another, that ought so to determine the matter as to oblige all other Men quietly to yield and suffer him to enjoy and use that same thing, whatever it be, as his own. For where the Ballance stands exactly even, a small matter is enough to turn the Scale to one side. Now in these following Cases there seems to be great

Reason

Reason for determining a Property in a thing to particular persons, *viz.* 1. When a Man is the first that takes actual Possession of a thing, and converts it to his own use. For such a Possession is an addition to his general Right beyond what any other Man, who never was in Possession, can pretend. And why should I part with my Possession to any other, or he demand it from me, except he were able to make out a better Title than I to the thing in dispute? 2. When a Man takes Possession of a thing, which is actually rejected and deserted by him, who last had the Right to, and Possession of it. For his Case seems to be much the

the ſame with his who firſt takes Poſſeſſion of a thing. 3. When a thing is given, or in Exchange made over, to another by him who had before a juſt Right thereto: for it is highly reaſonable, that every Man ſhould have liberty to diſpoſe of his own. 4. When a Company of People do by an Agreement make a Partition of what was before in Common amongſt them all, it is reaſonable that every Man ſhould acquieſce in that ſhare which upon ſuch a Diviſion, ſhall fall to his Lot. 5. When a Man takes care and pains to produce and rear any thing for his own uſe or profit, it is reaſonable that he (and not another Man againſt

his

his Consent) should enjoy the benefit of his own Labour. And lastly, where a Society of People do submit their Properties unto a legislative Power which is erected amongst them, it is reasonable that herein they should always be concluded and determined by the Laws of that Community, of which they are Members. And if there be any other Rules for determining the Rights of Men to particular things, it is most evident, that due care must be taken to keep and observe them, or else farewel all Order and Society.

30. Where Fidelity is wanting, Society cannot be truly kept and preserved. I there-

fore conclude, that *every Man is obliged faithfully to perform whatever he Promises*; except the person to whom the Promise is made, do freely acquit and discharge him from it. But if a Man promises to do a thing which is sinful, he ought not to keep such a Promise as that; as I have already shewn in the Case of an Oath.

31. And the same Reasons which oblige us to hurt no Man, to yield to every Man his Right, and to keep our Promises, do plainly shew, that *he who wrongfully hurts another, or deprives him of his Right, or breaks his Promise made to him, ought, as far as he is able, to make full Restitution*

tion and Satisfaction to the person whom he has thus injured. For he that makes a Breach in humane Society, is doubtless obliged, as far as he can, to repair it.

32. Where a Proposition is literally false, and yet spoken with no manner of intention to deceive another, it is not to be called a Lye: But he who asserts any thing for a Truth, with an intent to make another believe it, which is, or for ought he knows may be, false, he only is to be esteemed a Lyar. Now some have doubted whether the sin of a Lye consists in the bare Untruth, or only in the Injustice of it; and from thence have been inclined to believe, that

such a Lye as does no hurt to any one, nor draws any manner of evil consequence after it, is not to be looked on as a sin; and so much the less, if it be told with a real design only to do Good, or prevent Mischief. The Niceties of this Controversy I leave to be discussed by others. But since humane Society cannot be upheld without, in many cases, a dependence upon one anothers Veracity, I may surely venture thus far to conclude; *viz.* That, not only such a Lye as tends to the damage of another; but also *such a Lye*, however otherwise innocent, *as gives occasion to render a Mans Truth suspected in other cases*, is to be reputed *unlawful*, if for

no other Reaſon, yet at leaſt fore this, becauſe it is injurious to humane Society. *And the* ſame *Reaſon will hold as ſtrongly againſt all mental Reſervations and equivocal Expreſſions*: For what is humane Society at any time the better for the literal Truth of what a Man ſays, if others who are therein concerned, do not underſtand his true meaning by the words which he ſpeaks to them?

33. It is highly reaſonable that every Man ſhould have ſuch an Eſteem and Reſpect ſhewed him, as may be proportionable to his Virtues and good Qualities: And as it is proper enough for a Man, by lawful ways, to aſſert his own

Reputation whenever it is unjuſtly aſperſed; ſo he ought to take eſpecial care in the management of all his Words and Actions, that he may not ſeem to exalt or magnifie himſelf, or to deſpiſe or undervalue others beyond what is not only juſt and true, but alſo neceſſary, either for the bringing about ſomething that is good, or the preventing ſomething that is evil. For there is ſcarce any thing that gives greater diſguſt, or helps to render a Man more odious to the World, than an overforwardneſs to praiſe and magnifie himſelf, and to undervalue others, if he be not neceſſitated thereto by ſome very juſt Reaſon: And on the

the contrary, there is ſcarce any thing which reconciles a Man more to the Favour and Good Will of People, than when he is not over apt to aſcribe much to himſelf, but is ready to give the utmoſt Honour and Reſpect to all others that in reaſon can be thought due. I conclude therefore, that *Pride is a Sin, and Humility a Duty*, becauſe the former tends to diſturb, but the latter ſtrengthens and confirms humane Society.

34. What is incumbent upon him to do, who has done wrong to another, I have juſt now ſhewn: But if another Man wrongs, or any way endeavours to Injure me; As it is lawful for me (ſo for

every Man) to ſtand upon my defence, and uſe my utmoſt endeavours to ſave my ſelf from Wrong, or recover that which is my Right; (for otherwiſe all the good and honeſt Men in the World would continually lie expoſed to the Wrongs and Inſults of any evil Man, who might have a mind to deſtroy them) ſo I, and *every Man ought to be ready* at any time *to be reconciled to an Adverſary or Enemy*; provided it may be upon ſuch terms as are conſiſtent with our own Safety: *Nor ought any Man* upon any occaſion *to do any greater harm to his keeneſt Enemy, than what he apprehends to be abſolutely neceſſary to his own preſervation.*

For

For since Society and Peace among Mankind is the Will and design of Almighty God; If a breach be made therein by another, I ought for my part to do nothing which may make it wider; but ever to be ready to give a helping hand to the closing and making up of it.

35. Hitherto I have endeavoured to lay down the main and fundamental Rules of that Duty, which every Man is obliged to pay and perform to God, to Himself, and to all other Men. Now to deduce all the particular branches of Virtue and Piety from these main Principles; and to shew how Morality is improved and refined by the Gospel to

the higheſt degree of perfection, is a thing not difficult to be done, but yet inconſiſtent with my deſigned Brevity: For which therefore I muſt refer my Reader to ſome of thoſe Books of Chriſtian Piety, wherein each Particular of our Duty is, at large, deſcribed and preſſed. But in the mean time if we would have a ſhorter Abſtract of our Duty than what I have now been giving; The Holy Scripture furniſhes us with three Rules (two expreſt, and one implied) from which every thing that we can be obliged to do, is eaſily deduced; And they are, 1. That *we ſhould love God with all our Heart Soul and Strength.* 2. That *we ſhould*

ſhould truly love our Selves, that is to ſay, ſo as always to aim at and purſue our true and chief Happineſs: And 3. That *we ſhould love others as we do our Selves*: Not with the ſame degree of Love; for that is not only unreaſonable, but impoſſible; but with the ſame Reality and Sincerity; or, in other terms, that *we ſhould* ever *do unto all other Men what we would* think reaſonable *that they ſhould do unto us*, if we were in their Circumſtances and they in ours. But beſides theſe general Duties, which are indiſcriminately incumbent upon all Men; there are divers particular ones, which do ariſe from thoſe ſeveral Relations which

Men may contract and bear to others, of which it is fit that I give some brief Account.

36. That God would have the Generation of Men continued and increased upon the Earth, is very evident; as well from the natural inclination which he has implanted in them (as in all other living Creatures) to propagate their Kind; as from that Love and Affection which is common to them with other Creatures towards those who spring from them. But if Mankind were propagated only by the exercise of wild and wandering Luft, without confinement to any setled Rules or Laws; this would bring

bring in such a Deluge of Confusion and disturbance, as would unavoidably deprive them of the greatest part of those satisfactions which at the present they do, or may, enjoy. For if there were no such thing as setled Marriages, we can hardly suppose that ever there would be any sort of setled Families, which are the first beginnings of Society and regularity amongst Men; Fathers would not know which were their own Children, and consequently would take no care to bring them up, or provide for them; and not only the pain of bearing, but the whole trouble of nourishing rearing and providing for Children, would

lie wholly upon the Female Sex, who by themselves could but very imperfectly perform that work as it should be done. Since therefore God intends the Comfort and satisfaction of Men, even whilst they are here upon Earth, I conclude, that it is his Will, that *Mankind should be propagated no other way but by setled Marriages*, that is, by a Compact and Agreement between the Male and Female, and that under such Rules as are fit and proper to promote the general Happiness of Mankind, which being his great design, ought even also to be ours.

37. That a Woman should have more than one Husband

at

at a time, is notoriously contrary to the design of Marriage, and therefore directly unlawful: And that a Man should have more than one Wife, at a time, the experience of many, in former Ages, and at this time, in the Eastern Countries, does sufficiently testifie to be contrary to that peace and quietness which is necessary to the Comfort and Happiness of every Family; and therefore not so agreeable to that universal Friendship which ought ever to be preserved amongst Men; but especially among those who are so nearly allyed together. Moreover, if Men and their Wives should have liberty to part one from the

other,

other, whenever they please (besides the Confusion and disturbance which this also must breed in Families, especially where there are Children in the case) Marriage would hardly differ from that wild and wandering Lust, against which I have spoken in the preceding Paragraph. I conclude therefore, that also, before the coming of Christ, if a Man took more Wives than one, not for Lust (which is unlawful ℣. 24.) but meerly for Propagation; it might in some cases be dispensed with; yet it ever was most pleasing to God, that a Man should have but one Wife at a time, and that nothing but Death should ever

part

part a Man and his Wife; except the evil Behaviour of one party ſhould make the continuance of the Marriage Compact and Cohabitation, not only ſomething uneaſy (for that for peace and quietneſs ſake ſhould be born patiently) but down-right intolerable. But theſe things which Reaſon may perhaps but imperfectly ſuggeſt, the Goſpel has paſſed and eſtabliſhed into Laws; *viz.* that, *as every Woman is to have but one Husband, ſo no Man muſt have more than one Wife at a time; nor muſt any thing part Man and Wife but Death*, except it be the caſe of Adultery: And better, much it is, that particular perſons ſhould ſometimes

times be forced to labour under ſome Inconvenience, than that any ſuch Liberty ſhould be allowed as tends to diſturb and diſtract the World.

38. We generally find, that all Men, even Heathens as well as Jews and Chriſtians, have conceived a more than ordinary abhorrence againſt the Marriage of ſuch perſons as were very nearly Allyed together within ſome certain Degrees of Relation. And ſince the World is wide enough for a Man to chuſe a Wife, or a Woman a Husband; thoſe general Rules which are given to us, in Scripture, of providing for things honeſt, not only in the ſight

ſight of God, but of Men alſo; and of taking care, not only about ſuch things as are juſt and honeſt, but alſo about ſuch as are lovely and of good report; ſhould teach us that *no perſon ſhould engage in ſuch a Marriage as is by wiſe men commonly reputed to be inceſtuous and unlawful.*

39. Since the relation of Husband and Wife, is wholly owing to the mutual Compact and Agreement which is made between them at their Marriage; the Duties which reſult from that Relation can be no other but the faithful keeping and obſerving of that ſame Compact and Agreement, the Conditions of which, may be more or fewer according as the

the parties ſhall think convenient. But theſe are always neceſſary, and muſt never be wanting; *viz.* that *the Husband and Wife muſt ſincerely love each other; muſt be ſtrictly faithful to each other's Bed* (without which, mutual Love can never be preſerved entire) *and* Chriſtianity expreſſly adds, what Reaſon perhaps does alſo obſcurely ſuggeſt, that *the Wife muſt be ſubject and obedient to her Husband.*

40. When Children are begotten and brought forth into the World, it is not reaſonable, nor agreeable to God's deſign, that they ſhould periſh and dye for want of care to be taken of them. Nor are

there

there any Perſons upon whom a greater obligation can lye to bring up Children, than upon thoſe who begat them, and were the cauſe of their being: And ſince God intends not the Miſery and Affliction; but generally the Comfort and ſatisfaction of Mankind upon Earth, as well as their Happineſs hereafter in Heaven; I conclude, that *it is ever the Duty of Parents to take the beſt care they can to bring up their Children, and to promote their true Happineſs*, both in this World, and that which is to come. For which reaſon we muſt needs ſuppoſe them to be veſted with a lawful Power of governing and chaſtiſing them, as far as is neceſſary to keep

keep them in good and regular order.

41. And on the other side, since *Children* are beholding to their Parents, even for their very Being, whereby they are capacitated, not only for the enjoyment of the Satisfactions of this Life, but also for eternal Happiness in the World to come; it is highly reasonable, that they *should love their Parents with a very high degree of Affection*; and should always be ready to make them the best returns of Duty and Service that they can. And according as Parents have been careful in bringing up and making Provision for their Children, so the Childrens Love and Affection ought still

ſtill more and more to be returned and expreſſed towards them.

42. Where Parents, by Death or otherwiſe, are rendred uncapable of nouriſhing and breeding up a Child; or where they utterly forſake and expoſe him to the wide World, before he is able to provide for, or take care of himſelf; If another perſon takes him, and maintains and puts him in a way of living, ſuch *a Child is* in all reaſon *obliged to pay a proportionable ſhare of filial Love and Duty to him who has performed the part of a Parent to him.*

43. It is not pretended, that ever any Perſon or Family, by name, were ever, by

by God's particular and revealed Appointment, invested with the Power of governing over such or such a certain People; excepting only the case of the People of *Israel*; I therefore conclude, that however *the Magistracy which is lawfully established throughout the World*, is ordained of God; it *is not by immediate Revelation from Heaven.*

44. Whether a Parent by the Law of Nature has the Power of a supreme Magistrate over his own Children, is not necessary here to enquire. But I see no ground in Reason or Nature, to judge that the eldest Son of any Kindered successively should have the same Power over his Brothers

thers and Sisters (who are no way beholding to him for their being, nor, it may be, for their well-being) and much less over his Fathers Brothers and Sisters; as the common Parent of a whole Family may have over all that spring from him. I conclude therefore, that *lawful Magistracy is not to be derived by the Law of Nature from the alone right of Primogeniture*; Nor do we ever meet with any Prince in History, who derived his Authority from this only Fountain; and if this were the true Right and Title of Magistracy, it would follow, that all the World ought to be but one Monarchy; and *Adam*'s Heir Male the Emperour

perour thereof; and all the Kings and Emperours that ever were, whose Titles were originally bottom'd upon another Foundation, were no better than meer Usurpers.

45. Where one Man conquers another: that is to say, by force of Arms, or by Stratagem, gets him so into his Power, as that he can destroy or kill him at his pleasure; the conquered person indeed, being obliged to do all that honestly he can for the preservation of his own Life, ought, on that account, to use his best endeavours by an obsequious Demeanour to assuage and pacifie the Fury of the Conquerour. But, farther than he finds necessary to his

his own Preſervation, he is not obliged to obey the Conquerour; except he binds himſelf thereto by ſome act of his own; there being no Law of God or Nature which lays any farther Obligation on him in that caſe but only to preſerve himſelf, without doing wrong to another. Since then all the World does allow that a Subject is bound to obey the Magiſtrate, who is lawfully ſet over him, even in thoſe caſes where no danger, in this world, would attend his Diſobedience, or, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *not only for Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience ſake.* It will follow, that *Conqueſt alone*, without any Compact or Agreement, *does not*

eſtabliſh the Conquerour a lawful Magiſtrate over the conquered People. For if it did, there could be no difference between a Liege Subject, and a Priſoner of War.

46. If any man unjuſtly invades the Property, or attempts the Life of another, It is lawful for him, to whom the Wrong is offered, to defend himſelf the beſt he can; And if he has no other way of ſecuring himſelf, nor can prevail with his Enemy to deſiſt from his evil Deſign, the neceſſity of preſerving himſelf from Death, or (which may be as bad, or worſe) from Ruin, will certainly juſtifie the Killing of him. For otherwiſe the Lives and Fortunes

tunes of all honeſt Men muſt for ever be expoſed to the arbitrary pleaſure of every lawleſs and wicked perſon, which is contrary to that comfort and ſatisfactory ſtate, which we ſuppoſe God generally to deſign for Men, even in this Life. And that which is allowable for every ſingle Man to do for himſelf, is ſurely no leſs lawful for a Society of Men combining together, to do for their joynt and mutual Safety. Moreover, if in ſuch a Society any perſon be taken in, or after, ſuch an unlawful Attempt, it is lawful for them to puniſh him in ſuch a manner (whether by death or otherwiſe) as may be neceſſary to terrifie

others from doing the like for the time to come: For without this, there could be no ſecurity againſt evil doers; who might contrive to act their Miſchief ſo ſecretly, as not to be killed, or even reſiſted in the very fact it ſelf. But if ſuch a Society have not certain Laws and Rules to proceed by in all ſuch caſes, and ſome certain perſons to put thoſe Laws in execution; every Man would take upon him to be his own Judge; and what might ſeem fit and reaſonable to one, might appear otherwiſe to another of a contrary intereſt, from whence perpetual Factions and Confuſion muſt needs follow. But there is no reaſon that

that any one, or more of ſuch a Society, without the conſent of the reſt, ſhould take upon them to make Laws for, or exerciſe Authority over the whole Community. For if it were in every Mans power to make himſelf a Magiſtrate, all might ſet up to be Rulers, and few or none would be Subjects; which would bring in Confuſion, and deſtroy the Society. But when the whole Society do agree and conſent, that ſuch certain perſons ſhall have the exerciſing of ſuch certain Powers (which originally are in the Body of the Society it ſelf) it is then lawful for thoſe perſons to act accordingly; and they who have conſented to their Authority

are, by virtue of that Conſent, obliged to pay Obedience to them. I conclude therefore, that *the Original of Magiſtrates is from the Conſent of the People*, ſince there is no other ſolid ground, that I can find, upon which to eſtabliſh them. *And when once a legiſlative and executive Power is thus ſetled and eſtabliſhed* by the conſent of a People, who acquieſce in it, and upon all occaſions take ſhelter under its Protection; it is to be looked upon as ratified and confirmed by God's own appointment; and *Subjection and Obedience is* accordingly *to be paid to it* by every particular perſon who abides within the precincts of its Juridiction. For this was the very

very caſe of the Roman Government, which was in St. *Paul*'s time; and there is exactly the ſame reaſon for it in all other Kingdoms and Common-wealths whatſoever.

47. Since then Magiſtracy derives it ſelf wholly from the Conſent of the People; from hence it will follow, that *the Original Rule of the Magiſtrates Power and the Subjects obedience, is* that Conſent which the People has given; or, in other terms, *thoſe Laws and Conſtitutions of the place, in which the Body of the Nation have acquieſced:* Beyond which neither any Magiſtrate ought to command, nor is any Subject bound to obey. For where there is no Law, there

can be no Tranſgreſſion, nor any Obligation to Obedience; nor conſequently any Right to Command.

48. But *if the legiſlative Power of any Nation do enact any thing which is contrary to the expreſs Law of God, or the eternal Laws of good and evil; No particular Man can be bound to obey ſuch a Conſtitution.* For the Authority of God ought to weigh more with us, than that of any Community whatſoever; And it is expreſly ruled in Scripture, that we ought to obey God rather than Man.

49. And the ſame Reaſon (*viz.* Self-preſervation) which allows a Society, thus ſetled into a Government, to puniſh

niſh Malefactors within themſelves; muſt alſo juſtifie them, if by force of Arms they defend themſelves againſt any foreign Enemy, which would wrong or oppreſs them; or endeavour to recover their Right from thoſe who have taken it from them, and refuſe to reſtore it. For otherwiſe it were in vain for a Community to hope to ſubſiſt by maintaining good Order and Diſcipline at home; if all the while they muſt, without remedy, lye continually expoſed to the Wrongs and Inſults of every Enemy which may aſſault them from abroad. I conclude therefore, that *War, whether defenſive or offenſive, may in many caſes, be very juſt and*

lawful: Nor is there the leaſt word throughout the Holy Scriptures, which may repreſent the Profeſſion of a *Soldier*, who fights under a lawful Authority, as any way contrary to Religion and a good Conſcience: Tho ſuch a Man certainly *ought not only to exerciſe his calling with as much Mildneſs and Humanity as can be conſiſtent with the ſervice of his Country; but alſo ever to ſatisfie himſelf firſt of the lawfulneſs of the Cauſe* in which he engages, *before he draws his Sword in the Quarrel*: For as we are obliged to do no hurt to any Man whatſoever, if we can avoid it; ſo, for the very ſame reaſon, ought we not to become inſtrumental in any

any Wrong or Injuſtice which another Man (let him be who he will) intends to do.

50. That *an humble Demeanour, together with a reaſonable Diligence, and an honeſt Fidelity to his Maſter, is the Duty of every Servant*, is moſt apparent; becauſe if a Servant be either haughty, negligent, or unfaithful, he ceaſes in effect to be a Servant. And on the other ſide, that *Juſtice and Humanity are* no leſs *the Duty of a Maſter towards his Servant* is altogether as clear, becauſe where theſe are not obſerved, the Condition of a Servant muſt be intolerable, and contrary to that comfortable ſtate which we ſuppoſe God to deſign for all Men; and

and therefore for Servants, who are as much Men, and as much valued by God, and for whom Christ died, as well as for their Masters.

51. That *all Christians* are, or (according to Christs Institution) *ought to be, combined together into one Society*, which is called *the Church*, I have already said Part 2. §. 40. Now in all such incorporated Societies these three things are ever to be considered, 1. What is the Design of the person or persons, who first gather and institute them? 2. What Advantage accrues to those who become Members of them? And 3*dly*. what are the Laws and Rules to be observed by the whole Body, and every Member

Member of it? The Design of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who, at the Will of his heavenly Father, instituted and embodied the Christian Church, was to purifie unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good works, or, in other terms, by this Incorporation so made, more effectually to promote the practice of Virtue and Godliness in the World. The benefit and advantage which every true Member of this Church may propose to himself, is the participation of God's Grace and assistance here for the better performance of his Duty, and the enjoyment of everlasting Happiness hereafter; both which are promised to us by

God in and through Christ Jesus our Saviour. And lastly, the Laws of the Christian Church are either, 1. The general Laws of Piety and Morality, of which I have hitherto been giving an account; or, 2. Such particular Constitutions as are proper to it, considered as a congregated and incorporated Body of Men; which I have reserved to be treated of in the last place of all.

52. *The first thing which is incumbent on every Man,* as (or rather, *in order to become*) *a Member of the Christian Church, is to be baptized* in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: Which Ceremony is intended to put us in

in mind of that Purity and Cleanneſs from ſin to which we ought to bring our Souls by a virtuous and holy life: And altho to wet or waſh the Body with Water, may ſeem but a ſlight and inconſiderable thing; yet ſince our Saviour Chriſt has expreſly appointed and commanded it, and ſince his Apoſtles were always moſt careful to perform it; inſomuch that even they who had received the extraordinary Gift of the Holy Ghoſt from Heaven, were yet required to be Baptized, in order to become viſible Members of the Church; This Ceremony, I think, ought not to be left off, or diſcontinued. Altho whether it be

per-

performed by dipping the Body under the Water, or by ſprinkling the Water upon it, to me ſeems to be altogether indifferent; and to be regulated only by Prudence, or the Cuſtom of particular places. For neither does the word *Baptize* ſignifie any more than to Waſh; which may be done either way; nor does it appear that the Apoſtles dipped all thoſe whom they baptized. Moreover, ſince ſprinkling, as well as dipping, may ſufficiently denote the waſhing and cleanſing of the Soul from ſin; and ſince Baptiſm is not expreſſly, in the Holy Scripture, determined to either of theſe ways, to the excluſion of the other; I conclude,

clude, that God has left the matter (so far) indifferent to us; and to be ordered according to Prudence, as the Circumstances of things and persons shall at any time direct: And as long as the Substance and Design of his Command is carefully retained, I see no necessity of being so very solicitous about a Circumstance of it; except it could evidently be made appear, that he had appointed and determined it.

53. Since then Baptism is as the Entrance or Door of Admittance into the Church of Christ, it will follow, that all they, and they only who are duly qualified to be Members of his Church, are fit to have

have Baptism administred to them. If any person has been brought up out of the Church, until he comes to years of understanding and knowledge; he is then, and only then, qualified to be a Member of the Church, when, having repented of all his former sins, he believes and owns that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and consequently receives and professes that Faith and Doctrine which he has taught and authorized, and obliges himself to live according to all those Laws and Rules which he has prescribed to us; this being the very Condition which our Saviour indespensably requires from his Church, and every Member

Member of it, according as they are capable of performing it. But if a Child be born of Christian Parents, or is so in the hands of Christian Guardians, as that it is in their power to bring him up in the true Religion; and they do promise and engage so to educate him; such a Child as this, even before he comes to any knowledge of things, is yet qualified to be a Member of the Church of Christ (upon the presumption that he will perform what God requires from him when he comes to be capable of it) and so to continue, if, by Apostacy or wickedness, he does not, in process of time, separate himself again from

from it. For this, beyond diſpute was the caſe of Infants, before the coming of Chriſt, who at eight days old (if Males) were to be Circumciſed, and thereby admitted into the Church of God, and within his Covenant, if they were either the Sons, or Servants born in the Houſe, of believing perſons, and who, as well as their Parents, are expreſſly ſaid to enter into Covenant with God, which is but another expreſſion for becoming of his Church: And no one ſurely will offer to ſay, that the Caſe of Infants is made worſe than it was, by our Saviours coming into the World; eſpecially, ſince he has

has expresſly commanded, that little Children ſhould come unto him, and not be forbidden; for that of ſuch is the Kingdom, that is, the Church of God. I conclude therefore, that not only *adult perſons, who make a due profeſſion of their Faith and Repentance*; but *alſo ſuch Infants as are in a way of being brought up in the Chriſtian Religion, are*, without any Obſtacle, *to be admitted to Baptiſm.*

54. There are ſome paſſages in the New Teſtament, which ſeem plainly to ſuggeſt to us, that it was a conſtant Cuſtom with the Apoſtles of Chriſt, to lay their Hands upon all ſuch as had been Baptized (which laying

on

on of Hands was undoubtedly accompanied with Prayer to God) in order to their receiving the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit of God: But that this was a thing positively prescribed, and commanded, I do not find clearly proved: And therefore, altho I dare not hastily condemn those particular Churches, where this same Custom is disused or intermitted; yet since the Grace and Assistance of the Holy Ghost, in order to the leading of a good life, and obtaining eternal Happiness, is for ever continued unto the Church, as I have said Part 2. §. 42. and therefore ought ever to be sought for (altho the working

ing of Miracles and ſpeaking of all Languages, without learning them, be ceaſed from amongſt us) I cannot but conclude, that the laying on of Hands upon perſons that have been baptized, together with Prayer to God for their growth and continuance in Grace, which is commonly called *Confirmation, is a prudent and godly Cuſtom, and ever fit to be continued in the Church.*

55. As every particular Man whatſoever is obliged, in his own private perſon, to honour and worſhip God; ſo *the Church, being a Society incorporated for the better ſerving of God, is under an Obligation* to do the ſame in her aſſociated

ated capacity, that is to
to assemble together for his
ship. And because the wh
Number of Christians, wh
are dispersed over the Face
the Earth, are not capable
meeting together in one pla
the Universal Church the
fore lies under a necessity
subdividing it self into pa
cular Churches; and those
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gregations are still, or ou
to be, but Parts and Memb
of that One Catholick Chu
which our Saviour Christ

appointed and founded, it follows, that none of them ought to constitute or act any thing amongst themselves, which may give a just occasion for the breaking of that Union and Concord which he designed, and has commanded always to be maintained amongst them. But on the contrary, Matters ought every where so to be ordered, as that if a Member of any one particular Church should travel into any other part of the World, he may meet with nothing in any Christian Congregation, where he comes, which justly should be a hinderance to him from assembling or communicating with it.

56. *The particular acts to be performed in these Christian Assemblies, are all such as tend to the Edification of the People* in Virtue and Godliness (which is the design of their Incorporation) and consequently, to the promoting of each mans eternal Salvation (which is the end that every Christian is supposed to pursue.) All which are reducible to these Two Heads, *viz.* Devotion towards God, which includes Confession of sins, Prayer for all things necessary, both for themselves and others, and Praising of God, as well for his own Excellency and Perfection, as for his Love and Beneficence to all Mankind: And 2. the Instruction of the People

People which are assembled; which is to be done by Reading and Explaining the Holy Scriptures, Catechizing, Preaching, &c. But there is one act of Devotion towards God to be performed in such publick Assemblies, which is commonly known by the name of the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, or the Holy Communion; of which it will be fit to say something more particularly, because it is an Ordinance altogether of positive Institution, as well as Baptism, of which I have already spoken.

57. As our Saviours Death and Passion, which he underwent for the sins of the whole World, should ever out of

Gratitude, be remembred by us in the most emphatical and affecting manner; so except we have, every one of us, a share and interest in that Attonement which he thereby made to God for us, we cannot, by the Terms of the Gospel, hope for eternal Salvation. In order then to bind us to it, he himself before his Death appointed it, as a perpetual Ordinance, for ever to be continued in his Church, that Bread should be blessed, broken, and eaten, and the Cup also blessed, distributed and drank, in such assemblies as should meet together in his Name, not only as a Remembrance of his Sufferings for us, which are thereby shewn forth and represented;

ted; but also as the Communion, that is to say, the exhibition of his Body and Blood unto, and the participation of them, by all faithful and good Christians. To say with the Roman Church, that the Substance of Bread and Wine, being blessed or consecrated in this Ordinance, are transubstantiated or turned into the very, real Substance, of the Body and Blood of Christ, so as that that very same Body of his which was crucified, and that Blood which was shed, are wholly and intirely received into the bodily Mouth, and swallowed down by every Communicant, does not only draw after it such monstrous Absurdities; as no Man, I

think, without renouncing his Reason, can digest, nor can be inferred from any passage of Scripture interpreted according to the Rules which I have laid down, Part 1. §. 25. and 33. But is also directly contrary even to the Letter, as well as Meaning of the New Testament, in which the Bread, in this Holy Institution, is plainly called Bread (and by the same Rule the Wine must still remain Wine, as to its natural substance) even after the Blessing or Consecration of it. As therefore I must needs conclude, that the Body and Blood of Christ are not received by the Members of his Church after that manner, which they of *Rome* do

do define; ſo muſt it alſo follow, that their Worſhiping of the Hoſt and pretended Sacrifice of Chriſt in the Maſs, together with their depriving the Laity of the Cup (which beſides other Abſurdities do wholly depend upon the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation) are none other than meer human and unlawful Inventions and practices. But ſince a Man may then be ſaid truly to receive and partake of any thing, tho at never ſo great a diſtance from him, when he has a real Intereſt in it, and enjoys the Benefit and Advantage of it (as a Man may have an Eſtate, and reap the Profits of it, tho it lies in a far diſtant Country) I do

therefore conclude, that the way whereby we do receive, or communicate in, the Body and Blood of Chriſt, by this Ordinance, is by being made Partakers of thoſe Benefits which by the Crucifying of his Body, and the ſhedding of his Blood do accrue to us; and that whoſoever eats of this Bread, and drinks of this Cup in ſuch a manner as Chriſt has appointed, has thereby aſſuredly a ſhare of thoſe Benefits held forth and conveyed unto him.

58. How often *this Ordinance is to be practiſed and repeated* in every Congregation, is not expreſly determined, either by Chriſt or his Apoſtles; and therefore can only be

be regulated by the Prudence of the Church it ſelf: But common Reaſon will tell us, that it ſhould be *ſo often at leaſt, as may be ſufficient to preſerve a freſh and lively Remembrance of the Sufferings of our Saviour in the minds of the People*; this being one main End of its firſt Inſtitution. And ſo often therefore ought every Chriſtian, who is arrived to years of underſtanding (for ſuch only are capable of doing any thing in remembrance of another) to come and be partakers of it. For to contemn or neglect this Ordinance, which Chriſt has appointed for ſuch a peculiar End, argues a great ſlight and diſregard of his Death and

Paſſion (beſides the Diſobedience to his Command) and therefore is juſtly to be looked on as a very great and heinous ſin.

59. As it is a great Affront, and even a Mocking of God, for a Man to draw near to him in any of his Ordinances, without a ſincere and well-meaning heart (for which Reaſon Hypocriſy in Scripture is repreſented as moſt odious, and the Prayer and Sacrifice of a wicked Man, whilſt he continues ſuch, is ſaid to be an Abomination unto God) ſo does he ſeem to reſent ſuch a Practice in no inſtance more than in this of the Holy Communion; of which he who eats and drinks unworthily, is expeſſly

ly said by the Apostle to be guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ, and to eat and drink Damnation to himself: Which Expressions altho they are differently interpreted by divers persons, yet in whatever sense we take them, they do abundantly shew, that God is in a particular manner offended with those, who any way profane this sacred Institution. *It* therefore *is the Duty*, and ought very much to be the concern, *of every Christian first, to examin himself*, and to make the best trial and enquiry that he can, whether he be truly sincere in his resolutions of serving and obeying God faithfully all his life-long (for any person who is thus disposed,

and

and none other, is ever acceptable to God) *And then* with Devotion and Reverence suitable unto such Sincerity, *to* come and *eat of this Bread, and drink of this Cup:* That as, on the one side, he may not neglect what Christ has commanded and required; so, on the other, he may not incur the Penalty which is threatned to an unworthy Receiver.

60. He that worships or prays to God by himself alone, may do it as well by offering up only the inward Thoughts and Desires of his Mind, which are clearly seen and known unto God, as by expressing himself outwardly by Words; which tho even in our private Devotions they may be very

proper

proper to keep our Minds intent upon what we are about, yet are no way neceſſary to inform God of what we think or wiſh for. But when a Society of Men do meet to joyn together in God's worſhip, their Devotion muſt of neceſſity be outwardly expreſſed in Words; becauſe there is no other way of keeping their Thoughts (wherein their Worſhip does conſiſt) united and joyned together. And ſince Words not underſtood are in effect the ſame with no Words at all; I conclude, that *the Language wherein the Worſhip of any Church* or Congregation *is offered up to God, muſt always be ſuch as is well underſtood by the Aſſembly of the Peo-*

ple

ple who meet together. Nor does even the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation amaze me more than that the Church of *Rome* ſhould own the 14*th.* Chapter of St. *Paul's* firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* to be the Word of God, and yet have all their publick Services every where performed in the Latine Tongue only, which is not now underſtood by the generality of any Nation in the World.

61. As *Peace and Unity, mutual Love and good Agreement* amongſt the Members of every Society, *together with Order and Decency* in all that is tranſacted amongſt them, are abſolutely neceſſary to the being and continuance, or at leaſt

leaſt to the well-being of the Society it ſelf; ſo *are* they carefully preſcribed and inculcated by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, as things *to be always preſerved and maintained in the Chriſtian Church.* And as he, who firſt occaſions the violation of any of them, is plainly guilty of a very great ſin; ſo in all Matters that are not particularly and clearly determined by God's Law, we cannot propoſe a better and ſafer Rule to our ſelves, than always to do that which tends moſt to the advancement and preſervation of them.

62. If ſome certain time be not determined for Chriſtians to meet together for God's Worſhip, which every Man may

may know of before it comes, and accordingly prepare himself for it by laying aside, for that time, his worldly Business, Disorder and Confusion (which is the natural Consequence of Uncertainty,) must needs follow. That one Day at least, in seven was expressly required by God, under the Mosaick Law, to be sanctified and set a part for his Service, is beyond dispute. That the Observation of the Jewish Sabbath, or the last Day of the Week is not required from the Christian Church, to me seems very evident from St. *Paul's* reckoning it amongst the transitory *Shadows* of the old Law, *Col.* 2. 17. But that we Christians ought not to be behind-

hand

hand with the Jews, in ſetting apart a proportion of our time for God's Service, I think will follow as well from the great Mercies which we have received from him; for which we, no leſs than they, ought to ſhew and expreſs our Thankfulneſs; as alſo from that general Rule which our Saviour has given us, that our Righteouſneſs ſhould even exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees. And that accordingly one Day in ſeven, namely the Firſt Day of the Week (which in Scripture is therefore called the Lord's Day, *Rev.* 1. 10.) has ever been ſo ſet apart for the Service of God in all Chriſtian Churches, I preſume will be

be denied by none; As alſo, that the Reaſon of the Apoſtles making choice of this particular Day, was in remembrance of our Saviour's glorious Reſurrection, which on that Day was performed, and whereby their Faith in him, which began to wavet, was confirmed and raiſed above all doubt or diffidence. Now ſince no Reaſon can be given, or ſo much as imagined why this Day ſhould be changed for any other Day of the Week; I do from what has been ſaid conclude, that *the Lord's Day*, or Firſt Day of the Week, *ought for ever to be kept holy in the Chriſtian Church; and particularly dedicated to the Service of God.* And where either the

the Church universal, or any particular Church has set aside any other days to be kept holy, in remembrance either of any of God's Mercies to us; or of the Martyrdom of any of his chosen Saints, who sealed the Truth of the Gospel with their Lives, and transmitted it so confirmed down unto us; or as Days of Fasting or Abstinence, in order to humble our selves before God for our Sins; since in all this there is nothing contrary to God's Law; nor any thing but what may be well consistent with, and serviceable to, true Piety; It will follow from what I have said, § 61. That every Member of such a Church is obliged to keep and observe these same other

other Holy Days, ſo far as no way to give Scandal, diſturb the Order, or break the Peace of the Church which has eſtabliſhed them.

63. Order and Decency neceſſarily require that *all the outward circumſtances of Worſhip*, which God himſelf has not determined by his own Law, *ſhould be* ſo *ſetled by the Church*, as that all Confuſion and Unſeemlineſs therein may, as much as is poſſible, be avoided. But care on the other ſide ought ever to be taken, that Modes and Ceremonies be not ſo multiplied as to become uneaſy and burdenſome, or diſtract the Devotion of the People. Now there being no ſuch fixed and demonſtrable

monſtrable Rules of Decency and Order, but what will have a different reliſh with different Men, according to their ſeveral Educations, and Cuſtoms to which they may have been uſed; it will be very difficult, if not impoſſible, for any Church ſo to regulate theſe external matters as to please every Mans Fancy, and give diſguſt to none: For what ſome may think to be but decent, others may take to be too formal or pompous; and what theſe may apprehend to be ſuitable to the Simplicity of Chriſtianity, another ſort may look on as mean and jejune. As therefore the Church in this caſe can do no more, but act according to

the best of her Prudence; so since every Man cannot expect to have his particular Fancy in these things pleased and gratified; *It will* evidently *appear to be the Duty of each private Christian, so far to comply with every such constitution of the Church where he dwells* (provided there be nothing in it which is sinful) *as not to break the Peace and Unity, or disturb the Order of the Church on that account.* But if any Church shall offer to impose any Ceremonies or practices whatsoever (which God has not prescribed, and which therefore are in themselves indifferent) not for Decency and Order; but as things in themselves Holy, or absolutely

ly neceſſary to Salvation (as ſome of old would have done by the Jewiſh Ceremonies) with ſuch Impoſitions as theſe no Chriſtian ought at all to comply; nor ſuffer his Religion or Conſcience to be thus burthened: But *every Man muſt ſtand faſt in that Liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free*; tho at the ſame time he muſt be very careful not to pretend, or uſe this Liberty as a Cloke of Maliciouſneſs.

64. Since different Opinions in matters of Religion are generally apt to beget Diſſenſions and Animoſities between thoſe who entertain them, as our dayly Experience does abundantly teſtifie; It ought to be the Church's, and every private

private Christian's endeavour, that all Men may become of one and the same Judgment, or at least, that there may be as few Differences amongst them as is possible. *When* therefore *any religious Dispute arises*, whereby the Church's Peace and Unity is like to be endangered, *It is free and proper for* (Nor is there any thing which should hinder) *either the Church universal, or any particular Church*, or even any prudent Men whatsoever, *to declare and publish their sense of the matter* in debate. But as no Man can be obliged to believe the Determination of any Church or party whatsoever, any farther than he is convinced and satisfied of its agree-

agreement with Reaſon and the Holy Scriptures, Part 2. §. 1, and 2. ſo is not any Man bound to oppoſe or diſpute even againſt an Error it ſelf; except there be ſomething in it which is injurious to Chriſtian Faith or practice; and conſequently which may prove pernicious to Men's Salvation. And therefore if ſuch a Miſtake, which may have prevailed in any Church, cannot well be rectified without endangering the breach of Peace and Charity (becauſe they who hold it, it may be, are obſtinately wedded to it) I think *it is the Duty of us all* to be very tender in ſuch a caſe, and to permit every Man freely to abound in his own

Senſe, until ſuch time as God ſhall think fit to bring them to a clearer ſight of the Truth. And *by no means to renounce the Communion of any Church on the account of any Error that is not damnable*; and much leſs on account only of ſuch Terms or Expreſſions as are but abſtruſe or of doubtful ſignification. For otherwiſe ſince the Apprehenſions of Men are ſo very different (eſpecially in ſuch things as being remote from our Senſes are matter only of rational Speculation) if Difference of Opinion upon ſuch theological Queſtions, as do not immediately concern our Salvation, were a ſufficient ground for Separation in point of Communion, there would

would ſoon be probably almoſt as many Churches as Men in the World. But if any Church ſhall require from a Man, either to comply with, or practiſe, any thing, which is, not only againſt his Fancy in point of Decency or Convenience, but alſo againſt his Conſcience in point of Lawfulneſs; or that he ſhould not only be ſilent and not oppoſe, but alſo explicitly profeſs the Belief of, any ſuch Doctrines as he judges to be falſe (however innocent the Belief of them may be to them who think them true) and if ſuch a Church ſhall refuſe and deny her Communion to all thoſe who will not joyn with her upon theſe Terms; We

must rather be contented to be excluded from such a Church's Communion, than to purchase it by solemnly telling a down-right Lye before God and the World, or by the violation of any other of God's Commands: For if we offer to do Evil that Good may come of it, St. *Paul* has declared us to be in a state of Damnation.

65. For the due regulation of every Society, it is necessary that it have a Power, somewhere or other vested in it, over its own Members, either to compel them to live orderly, according to its Laws and Constitutions, or, if any of them are disobedient and refractory, and will not, upon

upon due admonition, be reclaimed; wholly to exclude them from the Body of the Community. For, otherwise, if the Members of any Society may at their pleasure break its Constitutions, and violate its Laws without control, this would be wholly to pull down the Enclosure, and lay all open and common, as before; and consequently, in effect to dissolve the Society it self. And accordingly *our Saviour has given the Church a Power to admonish and rebuke those who give any scandal by their ungodly and unruly Behaviour; and if* upon this *they do not repent and reform, of rejecting and cutting them off from her Communion.* Which

Authority must ever be exercised with due mildness and caution, for the edification, and not with heat and fury, which in the end would more probably tend to the destruction of the Church. But if any Church shall go beyond this to punish or persecute Men, with Fire and Sword or with Fines and Imprisonment, only for being of a different persuasion from, and refusing to communicate with, her; In my Opinion she herein acts contrary to that Mildness and Gentleness which the Gospel upon all occasions prescribes; and particularly in the case of dealing with those who oppose themselves to it, 2 *Tim.* 2. 24.

Altho

Altho at the ſame time it cannot be denyed, but that if any Man, under the pretence of Conſcience, or Religion, ſhall advance ſuch Doctrines or do ſuch acts as are deſtructive to the peace or ſafety of the civil State or Commonwealth; the civil Magiſtrate may, and ought to puniſh ſuch a perſon according to the Laws of the Land, notwithſtanding all his pretences. For if the Plea of Conſcience (the truth of which can only be known to Almighty God) be ſufficient to ſave any Malefactour from Puniſhment, no civil Society can ever be ſafe, and all humane Laws and Magiſtrates would be wholly uſeleſs. See Part 1. §. 35.

66. And as Almighty God in his Mercy is pleaſed not to cut the greateſt ſinners off from all hopes of pardon; but is ready at any time, upon their true and ſincere Repentance, to receive them again into his Favour, ſo has he committed unto *the Church* the miniſtry of Reconciliation; which Church therefore accordingly *ought not only to endeavour to bring ſinners to Repentance by Preaching, Admonition and Exhortation; but alſo wherever ſhe ſees evident Marks and Tokens of it in any perſon* (of which yet there ought to be good aſſurance) for his greater comfort and eaſe of Conſcience, *to remit* or abſolve him from *his ſins,*

and

and reſtore him again to the benefit and privilege of *Chriſtian Communion*, of which I ſuppoſe that he has, or ought to have, been deprived: And whatever Sentence of thus binding or looſing, remitting or retaining of Men's ſins is duly and regularly pronounced by the Church upon Earth, our Saviour aſſures us it ſhall be ratified and confirmed by God in Heaven. But that a Man is obliged to make a particular Confeſſion of all his ſins unto any other perſon, except God, in order to obtain the Pardon of, or Abſolution from them; as I no where find it aſſerted in the Holy Scripture; ſo the reaſon which the Roman Divines

do allege for it, is very weak and unconcluding: For it is not the particular Confeſſion of a Man's ſins (which may be performed by the moſt hardened impenitent) but his Contrition, and the viſible reformation of his life (which may ſufficiently appear without a particular Confeſſion) that only can enable the Church or her Miniſters to judge whether he truly repents of his ſins or not, and conſequently whether he be a proper Object of God's Mercy and the Church's Favour. Altho I deny not but that in ſome caſes it may be very proper for a Man to make known the diſeaſes of his Soul to a prudent Spiritual Phyſician,

Phyſician, that he may have his advice for the cure of them. And his Duty alſo to make an open Confeſſion of his ſins whenever it is neceſſary for God's Glory, or to repair any publick ſcandal which has been given by him.

67. That Almighty God, even where he has pardoned a Man's ſins upon his true Repentance, may yet, on the ſcore of thoſe very ſins which he has ſo pardoned, lay ſome ſharp and ſevere temporal Afflictions upon the penitent, either to keep him more effectually from ſinning for the time to come, or that it may be a Terror to others; or for many other reaſons beſt known to himſelf, is a thing that

that cannot be disputed. But from hence to infer, that these temporal Afflictions, if not laid on us in this World, are to be undergone in Purgatory, and that therefore, for the preventing them, it is fit and necessary *that Penance should be imposed by way of satisfaction, or Indulgences granted by way of Remission*; and all this without any Warrant from the Holy Scripture, save only a faint and forced Consequence from some few perverted Texts; *is a thing so groundless and precarious*, that it amazes me to think how Men can suffer themselves to be so grossly imposed upon. And whosoever shall duly consider upon what weak grounds the Pope

Pope and his Prelates do pretend to a Power of diſpenſing and diſtributing the Merits of Chriſt unto the People by way of Indulgence; (as if they alone had the keeping of that Treaſure under Lock and Key; and to which, tho, infinite, they have yet added the Merits of the Saints to make their Treaſure more abundant;) will, I think, very much wonder that their People ſhould be ſo free to part with their earthly Treaſure in purchaſing theſe Indulgences upon no better ſecurity.

68. That the Apoſtles of Chriſt, when they were firſt ſent abroad to preach the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, did anoint many ſick perſons with Oyl,

Oyl, and thereby miraculouſly heal them, we are plainly told by St. *Mark*, *c.* 6. *v.* 13. And that in this they did no more than what Chriſt himſelf had expreſſly commanded them, is moſt reaſonable and probable to ſuppoſe. Moreover, that the anointing with Oyl, which is mentioned by St. *James*, *c.* 5. *v.* 14. was intended for the very ſame purpoſe; *viz.* the raiſing up the ſick perſon and reſtoring him to Health, is as apparent as any thing can be from the very Context. But as *we do not find that* this *anointing of the ſick was appointed* either by Chriſt or his Apoſtles, *as a ſtanding and perpetual Ordinance for ever to be uſed in the Church*;

Church; ſo ſince Experience ſhews, that the miraculous effect of healing thereby is now wholly ceaſed; I can ſee no reaſon why the practice it ſelf ſhould be any longer continued. But what juſt ground the Church of Rome can have from either of theſe, or any other place of Scripture for the divine Inſtitution of their Extreme Unction, which they make uſe of for a far different end, namely the preparing thereby of perſons who are paſt hopes of recovery, for their paſſage into the next life, is more than I am able to find out.

69. As the Body natural would be but a confuſed and uſeleſs Lump, if it were not diſtin-

distinguished into the several Members, which are necessary for its own Service and preservation: And as the Body-politick would be but a disorderly Rabble, if there were not Magistrates setled to rule and govern, and ministerial Officers appointed to perform all necessary Functions in and about it; so the Holy Scripture, as well as Reason, assures us (and the practice of the apostolical Church, which is there recorded, confirms it) that the like Appointment and distinction of Offices are no less necessary in the Church; in order to the regular and orderly government of it, and the due execution of all its Laws and Constitutions. But how

how far these Offices are limited and appointed by the Law of God, or how far left to be setled, and determined by the Prudence of the Church, according as Circumstances may render it convenient, is what I shall not take upon me to pronounce my Sentence in. But *whatever Polity or ecclesiastical Constitution is setled and acquiesced in, either by the whole Church in general, or by that of any Nation or Country in particular, I think, ought quietly to be submitted to by every one who would be a Member of such respective Church*, except there appears to him to be either something therein, which is not only uncommanded, but even contrary

trary to the Law of God; or elſe ſomething wanting, which God requires, and therefore is abſolutely neceſſary to be maintained and kept up in all Churches. Nor can I apprehend that any leſs Warrant can be ſufficient for breaking or endangering the Peace or Unity of the Church (the preſervation of which is ſo often and ſo earneſtly recommended to us in the Holy Scripture) beſides the abſolute neceſſity of obeying the Poſitive Command of God himſelf. And therefore, ſince the Government of the Church by Biſhops, that is to ſay, by certain perſons having in their ſeveral Diſtricts a Priority among, and in ſome reſpects

ſpects a Superiority over, the Presbyters; has for ſo many Ages been univerſally ſetled amongſt, and acquieſced in by, all Chriſtians in all parts of the World; I cannot find how they can be excuſed, who (without any neceſſity for ſo doing) have ſo earneſtly ſet themſelves, not only to retrench the Exceſſes, and rectifie the Abuſes of the epiſcopal Power; but alſo to pull down, and wholly aboliſh, the very Order it ſelf; to the no ſmall ſcandal of thoſe who think that ſo univerſal a Conſtitution, every where taking place, even in the primitive Church, could be grounded on no leſs than an Apoſtolick Ordinance (of which

which there ſeems to be ſome, not obſcure, Foot-ſteps in the Scriptures of the New Teſtament) and that moſt probably in conformity to that Imparity which Chriſt himſelf eſtabliſhed between the Apoſtles and the ſeventy Diſciples; who were yet both commiſſioned by him to preach the Goſpel.

70. How far a caſe of neceſſity may, upon ſome occaſions, excuſe or juſtifie a Man for taking on him an Office which regularly does not belong to him, eſpecially if his deſign therein be truly honeſt and ſincere, I know not. But *no Man* certainly *ought to intrude into any eccleſiaſtical Function; or exerciſe any ſuch*

ſuch Office, who is not called and admitted thereunto by the lawful Authority, and according to the eſtabliſhed Conſtitutions of the Society. For if this be not carefully obſerved, the diſtinction of Offices and Functions in the Church is in effect wholly taken away; and a wide Door opened for Confuſion and Anarchy. But then on the other ſide, good care ought ever to be taken by the Church, that no perſons be entruſted with any ſacred Office, but ſuch as are duly qualified for it; And that ſuch a Maintainance be provided and ſetled for every ſuch perſon, as that he may not be neceſſitated to neglect the publick Service of God and the due exerciſe

exercise of his Function, by being constrained to bestow and spend overmuch of his Time and Labour in getting a Living for himself and his Family.

71. I have now gone through what I at first designed; and have not, that I know of, omitted any one thing which I could judge to be a material or necessary part of Religion; Altho I have on purpose endeavoured to avoid the use of some Words, which do frequently occur in all or most Systems of Divinity that I have met with; And the reason why I have so done, is not that I find fault with the Words themselves; but because I would have my Reader

der take notice that *Religion does not consist in Terms of Art or forms of expression*; but in the belief and practice of such things as God has made known, and requires from us; And it is too common among Men to wrangle about Words, before they have clearly fixed and agreed upon the meaning of them. I have not, for example, made use of this Term *Justification*; But yet I have endeavoured to shew upon what conditions a sinner obtains the Pardon of his sins and Mercy at the hand of God; which is the same thing: Nor have I said any thing of the nature or number of *Sacraments*: But I have spoken what I thought might be necessary

ceſſary concerning Baptiſm, the Holy Communion, and thoſe other things which the Church of Rome calls by that name. And if once I am ſatisfied touching any thing, how far God requires it from us, and whether or no it be neceſſary to Salvation; I cannot ſee why I ſhould trouble my ſelf much in enquiring, whether ſuch a thing may properly be called a Sacrament or not, which to me ſeems no more but a diſpute about the meaning of a Word. True indeed, it is, that in the Doctrine of the Trinity, which I have delivered, Part 2. §. 22. I have expreſly made uſe of the Terms *perſon, ſubſtance, &c.* becauſe I could find none o-

thers

thers ſo fit and proper to expreſs my Thoughts; Nor durſt I venture in ſo ſublime a matter to apply new Words to thoſe things of which I can have but very imperfect and obſcure Conceptions. And having thus ſaid all that I intend upon this occaſion, I freely ſubmit the Whole to the Judgment and Cenſure of every Reader; leaving him to that liberty which I my ſelf always deſire to enjoy; and being ready to retract any thing that I have ſaid, whenſoever I am convinced that I have been therein miſtaken.

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